

SHAUL SHAKED

**Dualism in  
Transformation**

*Varieties of Religion  
in Sasanian Iran*

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JORDAN LECTURES 1991

# **Dualism in Transformation**

*Varieties of Religion in Sasanian  
Iran*

by

SHAUL SHAKED

*Professor of Iranian Studies and  
Comparative Religion*

*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN  
STUDIES

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# Introduction

The SASANIAN period was a crucial time in the formation of several great religious traditions of the Near East—Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism—and in laying the foundations for that which was to come, the emergence of Islam. In discussing a certain number of issues in the religious history of Iran under the Sasanians we have to touch upon some larger questions that are not easily answered, but I hope that this book will provide materials for treating them.

One of these questions concerns the character and structure of dualism. A typology of this religious phenomenon cannot be undertaken here, but an examination of Sasanian religion can give an idea of the scope and limits of flexibility of a dualistic system. Quite apart from the question as to what extent religion in Sasanian Iran can be defined as dualism is the question to what extent Sasanian Zoroastrians defined themselves as dualists. As I am trying to show, throughout much of the Sasanian period they were probably not self-conscious dualists. There is very little by way of dualistic assertion in most of the extant Sasanian compositions. The theme does not come up in the monumental stone inscriptions of the early Sasanian kings or of the chief priest Kirdēr, nor is it a prominent theme in the debates between Zoroastrians and Christians of that period.

Another theme that comes up is that of the great divergence of cults and deities, and also of the ready identification of alien gods with Zoroastrian divine figures. This has sometimes been described as a deliberate policy of syncretism, designed to serve the purpose of fusing together the diverse elements of the Sasanian monarchy (see, for example, Pigulevskaja 1963:236). One may doubt this. On the other hand, there is a tendency to glorify the task of the Sasanian kings in establishing a new Zoroastrian church structure and in creating a theocratic state adhering to the Zoroastrian faith. This too seems to be a somewhat exaggerated view. The Sasanian kings did try to gain control



over the religious establishment by elevating certain priests to high positions, by using religious language and by making generous endowments for religious purposes, but the fusion of state and religion was probably a mere slogan, flaunted by the kings in one direction and by the priests in another, rather than a reality. The priests, for their own part, did not constitute a homogeneous body. While some of them were in the employ of the king, others cherished their independence and uttered criticism of the court priests.

The great diversity of doctrine, myth, and perhaps also practice, is a surprising aspect of Sasanian religion. A delicate question that is presented here is that of defining what could fall within the limits of that which was acceptable within the fold of Zoroastrianism, and what had to be declared heretical and as falling outside the bounds of toleration. Manichaeism was a religion apart, but we know that it flirted with Zoroastrianism, at least in so far as to use this flirtation as a missionary trick to win over converts. Mazdakism seems to have been placed firmly outside, although it may have developed out of a school of Zoroastrian exegesis. Other divergencies were for the most part tolerated, even though they were sometimes the target of polemics. This may have been the case with the myth of Zurvan, or with the exegetical school of the 'heretic' Sēn.

Was Sasanian Mazdaism a viable religion? It is easy to reply to this question in the negative with the hindsight of the downfall of the Sasanian empire and the crumbling of the Sasanian civilization before the encroachment of Islam. But this is hardly a fair point of view. It resembles the wisdom of Ahreman, who knows things by after-knowledge, as opposed to that of Ohrmazd, who understands and knows them right from the start.

Did it satisfy the yearnings of people who were looking for the ultimate religious truth? A decisive negative answer was given to this question by Professor Gnoli:

Sasanian Mazdeism was certainly not an effective interpreter of the anxieties of third-century man: the new religion of the mowbeds, the restored, canonized and codified Mazdeism, that had become the support and instrument of the newly acquired power of the Persian élite, was unable or unwilling to give—and in fact did not give—a convincing answer to those anxieties, which were fairly common in Iran too, as can be seen by the numerous conversions to Manichaeism and Christianity (Gnoli 1989:159).

A large number of conversions could indeed be an indicator of a problem. But we have no statistics of conversions, nor do we know whether they constituted a danger to the Mazdaean church. Of the progress of Christianity we hear from the descriptions of the Christians themselves. They did establish communities in many places, but we have no exact knowledge of the numbers. On the other hand, the great tenacity of Zoroastrians in upholding their religion in the face of the enormous pressures put upon them by the Arab conquerors, the fact that the country did not turn to be Muslim overnight but that it may have taken more than a century for Iran to become overwhelmingly Muslim, all of this may indicate that the appeal of a foreign religion together with the incentives that conversion of Fered were not sufficient grounds to make many people promptly abandon the Mazdaean religion. The survival of Zoroastrianism up to the present day in Iran and in exile shows that there was in it a certain resilience that could withstand any amount of persuasion.

That there was much more to Sasanian Zoroastrianism than the ritual, myth and doctrine of which we get to read in the Pahlavi books is quite evident. There is reason to believe that there was an aspect of the religion that reflected deeply-felt spiritual, perhaps mystical, attitudes, and this may mitigate the somewhat stark impression that we are apt to form of late Zoroastrianism. Indeed, it may be suggested that some of the mystical fervor of Islam was derived from Zoroastrianism, although it is not easy to show this in any detail, because the Zoroastrian material only reached us through the channels of late priestly transmission, which exercised a certain process of selection on its literary heritage.

Understanding Sasanian Zoroastrianism is bound to contribute to a better understanding of the development of the Judaism and Christianity of the area. Occasional comparisons with these two religions also help to give a better insight into some of the characteristic points of Zoroastrianism. I hope that this process will contribute something towards a more rounded description of the religious situation of Sasanian Iran and Mesopotamia.

\* \* \*

The occasion of the Jordan lectures gave me a welcome opportunity to summarize for myself what seems to me a neglected aspect of Sasanian religion. While using the information contained in the Pahlavi books, it has been my aim to try and go beyond them and reconstruct the religious life of the period in as much fullness and diversity as our sources allow. Several sources clearly need further elaboration, but I hope that the direction taken will be helpful.

I should like to express my appreciation to the School of Oriental and African Studies for inviting me to deliver these lectures, particularly to the former Pro-Director of the School, Professor John Wansbrough. Thanks are also due to Dr. Gerald Hawting, Chairman of the Centre of Religion and Philosophy, for managing the lectures with understanding and efficiency. The audience at the lecture and seminars was warm and responsive, and the comments made were helpful in the final formulation of the text. It was particularly rewarding to see among them members of the Zoroastrian community, although they may have felt inclined to disagree over certain points in my presentation.

Professor Mary Boyce paid me the honour of attending some of the meetings, despite the hardship involved. I owe her much for instruction in Zoroastrianism, for discussions of Zoroastrian matters over many years, and for the wisdom and knowledge of her scholarly writings. I am pleased to note that our differences over some points of interpretation have not marred our friendship.

My wife, Miriam, and our children have given me over many years love and understanding support. I should like to express by heartfelt thanks to them.\*

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\* For an explanation of the signs used in textual editions and translations see p. 161.

# I

## Cosmogony and Dualism

THE WORLD of Late Antiquity, in the east as well as in the west (i.e., both in the Iranian and in the Greek-dominated world), was deeply concerned with the hereafter. The hereafter was a powerful presence in both its aspects: both as an expectation of a world-to-come that, lying as it were beyond the horizon of the future, could nevertheless be deduced from scriptures, and then described and studied; and as an awareness that there is something there even now, as we lead our lives on earth. That something may be hidden by a barrier of invisibility, something like a curtain, expressed in the Jewish tradition by the Iranian term *pargod*.<sup>1</sup> This curtain is capable of being lifted from time to time, at least by certain people endowed with special gifts. All this is true for the three major religions of the period with which we are concerned, Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. It is also true for their several offshoots and the related faiths, such as Manichaeism and the Gnostic groups. We shall concentrate here on the Iranian world of the period, and more particularly on Western Iran, and shall try to understand its main characteristics.

It was this concern with the hereafter that gave life its religious sense; it also endowed the conceptions of the beginning of the world with their shape and meaning. This is very clearly the case in Iran. The

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<sup>1</sup> The corresponding Middle Persian term for this religious notion may have been *parisp* 'wall' (cf. Shaked 1979:272, note 215.2; on the word, cf. Nyberg 1974:151). The Jewish term *pargod* is borrowed from the usage of the Sasanian, perhaps already the Parthian, court, where a curtain separated the monarch from his visitors. It is not clear what word was used to designate this feature of the royal audience hall in the Sasanian period. Its reflection in the Arabic tradition is in the Arabic word *ḥijāb* on which cf. Shaked 1986. For *pargod* see reference in Widengren 1960:91. Cf. Hofius 1982 for the history of this notion in Judaism.

descriptions of the creation of the world are tied up in a very close manner with the end; it is with the end in mind that the world came into being. Certain elements of those descriptions illustrate the point. The creation of the world is the result of a pact concluded between Ohrmazd, the God, and his adversary, the Evil Spirit. This pact was devised by the omniscient Ohrmazd as a trap for Ahreman, whose attributes include slowness of wit. This is a peculiar agreement, for it makes Ahreman, the Evil Spirit, in a way a partner in the act of creation. Although his cooperation is somewhat perverse, creation could not have taken place without the initial consent of Ahreman. The essential point in this agreement, however, is the time limit set for the existence of the world and the resulting timetable for eschatology: as a result, the world contains a timing-device that was placed in it from the moment of its inception. When the last moment comes, the world as we know it will be dissolved and will give place to a new creation. While many of the elements of the world may be unpredictable, this particular point, the moment of its dissolution, is fixed and immutable.

When was this conception of cosmic history first formulated in Iran? The question is not easy to answer. The creation story is only fully formulated in the Pahlavi books, which were put into writing in the Islamic period, around the ninth century C.E., but there can be no doubt that much of the material that they contain dates back to an earlier period.<sup>2</sup> The Pahlavi books present these conceptions as a *zand*, a commentary on the Avesta, as is explicitly stated in the *Bundahishn*.<sup>3</sup> How much trust can we place in this assertion? We have come to distrust the *zand* as a reliable rendering of lost Avestan passages, as we know that in the extant texts the *zand* often diverges so much from the original as to make the relationship between them tenuous.<sup>4</sup> There can,

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<sup>2</sup> Thus e.g. Boyce 1968:32

<sup>3</sup> Boyce 1968c:40 f.

<sup>4</sup> On the reliability and coherence of *zand* see Bailey 1943 (=1971):149 ff.; as well as Boyce 1982:253 f., who, for reasons I cannot share, attributes the work of *zand* to Zurvanite priests. One may perhaps object to the current notion that these divergences are merely a reflection of the ignorance of the priests as to the correct meaning of the Avestan text. As often as not it seems that the divergence is due not to inadvertent error but to the process of free elaboration and interpretation, sometimes taking the form of allegory, as in the Jewish *midrash*. Cf. Shaked 1979:xxiii f., where brief reference is made to the etymological type of interpretation.

however, be little doubt that in the eyes of the Sasanian commentators these conceptions were part of their ancient sacred heritage.

We shall not concern ourselves here with the problem of the origins of these conceptions in Iran, a problem that is not capable of a clear and decisive solution in our present state of knowledge. Our main aim will rather be to elucidate the religious views of people during the Sasanian period. By that time, the religion that was reigning in Iran had long ceased to be Zarathushtrism, if this is our designation of the pure teachings of the Prophet Zarathushtra, following the terminology suggested by Ilya Gershevitch.<sup>5</sup> Instead, there prevailed a form of the religion that had undergone a long period of growth and change, a period lasting probably more than a millennium. It should be emphasized, besides, that our understanding of the original teachings of Zarathushtra is quite imperfect. At any rate, no religion could exist for this length of time without developing and modifying some of its language and several aspects of its faith. If it had stayed without change, it would probably not have been a living social reality at all. Outside the Gathas we are dealing with Zoroastrianism, the late phase in the history of the Iranian religion.

As an analogy for the kind of change that might have taken place in the Iranian religion during more than a millennium, a long period during which it slowly found its own style and way of life, we may mention the case of the religion of Israel. From the origins of that religion, which may be placed, as one chooses, in the nebulous period of Moses, or in the early prophetic era, to the final emergence of post-biblical Judaism,

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<sup>5</sup> Gershevitch 1959:8 ff.; 1964. I prefer to use a simplified form of this terminology, referring to anything that is not the original message of Zoroaster (for which we only have the evidence of the Gathas) as Zoroastrianism, whether rigorously based on the scriptures or more loosely associated with them. The forms of the religion that adhere to the scriptures are not necessarily pure 'Zarathushtrism', as the scriptures consist of a variety of texts, composed in different epochs and milieus. Thus the Achaemenian religion seems to belong to the same broad religious tradition as Zoroastrianism, and the same could possibly be said of the little we know of the religion of the Parthians or of the Sogdians. The Zoroastrian tradition is thus a multifaceted concept. In this it stands in contrast to the message of Zarathushtra (which can only be understood imperfectly), on the one hand, and to the priestly orthodoxy of the late Sasanian or early post-Sasanian period as formulated in the Pahlavi books, on the other. The Pahlavi books present a relatively uniform religion, where divergent approaches between schools of interpretation on secondary points are occasionally revealed, but only rarely profound differences over matters of doctrine.

several aspects of faith and practice underwent such deep transformation that the religious civilization of Judaism is hardly recognizable. And yet it may be claimed that a certain religious personality—if one may use such a term for a communal experience—remains constant through all these modifications. This personality may be described as consisting of a number of distinct features that do not seem to dissipate or melt away through all those stages of development that have caused the character of everything else to change almost beyond recognition. In the case of Judaism these features are perhaps the insistence on the idea of the unity of God, the bond between God and his people, the significance of bearing in mind the history of that bond, and the moral character of that bond. A similar model, I suggest, may apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Iranian religion as well.

One such constant factor in Iran seems to be the strong awareness of the moral split in the divine world, and consequently also of the created world, that which is known as the Iranian dualism. We shall try in the following to show that there are several permutations of this idea, not only in the diachronic axis from the Gathic period to the Sasanian era, but also synchronically within the broad limits of Sasanian religion.<sup>6</sup>

It is typical of Zoroastrian thinking of all periods that there was a strong link between the conception of the divine world, with cosmology and the structure of the universe, on the one hand, and the moral obligation of the individual, on the other. The ethical duty is perceived as deriving from the cosmic and divine split. Dualism cuts vertically through all the layers of existence. One classic formulation of this stance is the catechism that occurs in one of the Pahlavi texts. A man should ask himself three times every day: ‘Who am I? Whence do I come?’ etc., and the answers to be given to this series of questions set out the whole basic view of the world.<sup>7</sup> The task of setting oneself this type of questions also occurs in gnostic texts,<sup>8</sup> where they seem to be very much at home, and a similar set of questions is part of Jewish

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<sup>6</sup> Cosmogonical dualism is denied for the Gathas by several scholars, including Humbach 1959, and Kellens and Pirart 1988; 1990, but a strong dualistic tendency emerges even from their attenuated translations of such texts as Y 30:3 and the following verses. A broad characterization of Iranian dualism was undertaken by Menasce 1948.

<sup>7</sup> *PhlT* 41. This catechism is translated in Shaked 1979:xxv f., where further references are given. See also further in Lecture 5.

<sup>8</sup> Cf., for example, Jonas 1934; Stroumsa 1990:41.

literature, although with a different thrust.<sup>9</sup> In other words, they are part of the give-and-take of the religious world of the period. We shall have occasion to refer to other such correspondences in the course of the following lectures.

Another one of the constant factors is the interdependence of the twin concepts of cosmogony and eschatology. This is one of the few clear features of the Gathas. Quite unusually, there seems to be little divergence as to the understanding of the relevant verses between the various modern interpreters of the text, despite the fact that relatively little attention seems to have been paid to this feature, and although some modern commentators wish to deny the very existence of eschatology in the Gathas. It is however difficult to deny the eschatological character of a verse such as Y 30:7, where there is reference to the molten metal of the Final Judgement.<sup>10</sup>

The tendency towards using abstract notions to play the part of divine entities, although it was present in the Indo-Iranian culture from remote antiquity,<sup>11</sup> seems to be not only more pronounced but also more productive in the religious development of the Iranian branch of that culture, so much so that one can try to use it in order to identify specific Iranian traits against their Indo-Iranian background.<sup>12</sup> This results in a certain poverty on the mythological part, a certain anemia in so far as the creation of dramatic, tragic, or erotic mythological stories is concerned. Such stories are however not entirely absent. At certain periods, and in certain layers of the Iranian culture, extremely vivid stories are created, which rank among the finest known anywhere, particularly in the field of heroic legends. Nevertheless there is an overall

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<sup>9</sup> See Mishna, Abhot 3:1, where the following questions occur, to which one should know the answers: 'Whence did you come? Where will you go? In front of whom will you stand for trial?' The answers given to these questions reveal a conception of the person as a single entity, without regard for, or even awareness of, the dualism of body and soul. See Urbach 1979:224.

<sup>10</sup> Among the foremost representatives of the tendency to understand the Gathas as purely ritual in contents, Humbach 1959, 1:86 translates the crucial term as 'Ordalerz'; Kellens and Pirart 1988:111 refrain from translating this portion of the verse.

<sup>11</sup> See Geiger 1916:245 and elsewhere in his book.

<sup>12</sup> This is the type of argument that may be used to claim the Iranian origin of the deity Ahura Mazdā or a figure such as *Gaya-marstan*. See Shaked 1987c:238 f.



impression of soberness and restraint in the divine mythology of Iran when one compares it to that of India or Greece.

The view of the world as consisting essentially of two aspects, perhaps two modes of being, one that is mental and cannot be experienced by the senses, and the other material, or, as it was called in the ancient Iranian period, 'boney' or 'osseous', tangible and visible—in the Sasanian period this dichotomy was designated by the terms *mēnōg* and *gētīg*—seems to be another typical feature of the Iranian conception.<sup>13</sup>

This short list of characteristic points is by no means exhaustive; it nevertheless gives some of the flavour of the Iranian religion, a flavour that is there right from its start, and that has remained with it throughout its independent existence. Some of it must have struck to the Iranian varieties of Islam too, but any attempt to discuss these questions here may lead us to complex problems beyond the scope of our present theme. We shall try nevertheless to hint at some of these points further on in the course of these lectures.

In this context we are not so much concerned with the general history of religious ideas in Iran, but specifically with the Sasanian period. The preoccupation with this period may be justified on several grounds. We may recall that this was the last period of Iranian sovereignty, the one in which most Zoroastrian conceptions received their final formulation. It was also the period, alone perhaps in Zoroastrian history before modern times, where we have a reasonable amount of evidence from various sources by means of which we can check our statements, and thus reach a balanced picture. In other periods, it may be recalled, our reconstruction of the situation is usually based on scanty reports, some of which occur in foreign sources. Here, for the first time, we can look at the reports from different angles. We do not have to rely only on official Zoroastrian literature, valuable though it certainly is; nor do we have to rely chiefly on foreign reports, which may be refreshingly free from partisan bias, but which also necessarily contain some distortion due either to the writers' inability to grasp the realities of an alien culture, or to their sensationalism, exaggerating exotic views or practices out of proportion. In the case of the Sasanian period we often have the possibility of correcting the weaknesses of these diverse sources by juxtaposing them against each other. The fact that this has not always been done in a satisfactory manner is a matter for regret.

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<sup>13</sup> On this see Shaked 1971.

The Sasanian period is significant for other reasons as well. It is the period in which various religious movements and faiths were current in Iran, and in which they may have received their definitive forms. This is certainly true of Judaism. The Sasanian period is in many ways the most important of several turning-points in Jewish history, since it was the time when rabbinic Judaism finally emerged in its fully developed form. This was the period of the Babylonian Talmud, without which normative Judaism is inconceivable.<sup>14</sup>

This is also the period during which Christianity struck roots in the East, largely under Sasanian domination, and in which some of the great literary monuments of Christianity were created: the works of Aphrahat, Aphrem, Narsai, and the great and moving martyr figures of the east.

This was also the period of the appearance of Mani with his new world religion, Manichaeism, which assumed enormous power and influence in the world for several centuries, and which has left a permanent mark on Christianity, Islam and perhaps also Judaism.

In the seething corners of the Sasanian empire several other religious movements came into being and held sway for some time. We hardly know their names, apart from one or two: Mazdakism, which had at least one preceding movement to herald its coming, associated with the name of a certain Zarādusht, towards the end of the Sasanian period, is perhaps the only well-documented religious movement inside Zoroastrianism precisely because it happened so late in Sasanian history that its repercussions were still vividly present deep into the Islamic period.

The Mandaean and several other baptist gnostic-type movements must also have been around much of the time, but we have practically no knowledge of their early history, apart from the group in which Mani grew up as a young man, who are recognized as an offshoot of the Elchasaïtes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For the religious world of Talmudic Judaism the best overall discussion is Urbach 1979. The numerous works of Jacob Neusner, though not devoid of some merit, are of far less value from this point of view.

<sup>15</sup> Scholars have sought to discover a reference to the Mandaeans in the inscriptions of Kirdēr. Thus, in what looks like a double allusion to Christians, **klstydn** and **n'cl'y** (in KSM 14; KKZ 10), and in the mysterious term **mkty** (KKZ 10) scholars have sought to discover an appellation for the Mandaeans. In particular **n'cl'y** which is reminiscent of the term by which the Mandaeans often

Influences of Indian thinking were also present in the Iranian realm, with Buddhism being probably the most prominent force, especially in the eastern regions, and we have evidence of openness to Greek scientific and philosophical ideas.<sup>16</sup> All of this makes for as lively and diversified a period of intellectual and religious activity as could ever be found in ancient Iran.

The eschatological conceptions in Iran were closely associated to those of creation. Attempts have been made to represent the Gathic religion as devoid of an eschatological dimension, explaining it predominantly in terms of ritual preoccupations,<sup>17</sup> but I cannot help thinking that in this the desire to read the Gathas as cut off from the rest of the Iranian tradition goes one step too far. There are expressions in the Gathas for which, as we have seen, the most natural interpretation seems to be eschatological; the fact that the later tradition took them in a similar sense does not necessarily prove that this is wrong. In the later Avesta we have evidence of a well-developed eschatological view, and in the Pahlavi commentaries and elaborations the theme is central. Where the eschatological theme is perhaps most subdued is some portions of the Younger Avesta, notably the early Yashts, though they contain some very ancient material indeed. In these texts some mythological themes belonging to the remote Indo-Iranian past resurge, and much of the hoary old religious sentiment which preceded the prophecy of Zarathushtra is still to some extent alive. In these texts eschatology, as well as cosmogony, is much less prominent.

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call themselves, *Nāṣōrā* (cf. Lidzbarski 1922; Rudolph 1960/61:113 ff.), was suggested as a reference to them (Widengren 1965:277; 1984:3; Gnoli 1984b: 35. See also Cerutti 1981:151 ff.). On the other hand, Brock 1975:91 ff. has plausibly shown that the double designation may allude to two groups of Christians, those of western origin as opposed to indigenous Persians. A survey of some attempted solutions to the problem of these designations is in Back 1978:509. Bailey 1983 suggested that the term *mktky* denotes 'baptist' and indicates one of the baptist sects that were current in Iran in the third century, which he tends to identify with the community in which Mani grew up. Sundermann 1977:241 however made what seems at the moment the most plausible suggestion that *mktky* is a reflection of Syriac *mnqd'*, the term by which Theodor Bar Konay designates the baptists (see also MacKenzie 1989: 64, n. 25). On the baptist sect in which Mani spent his childhood see Henrichs 1973; Koenen 1981.

<sup>16</sup> A succinct discussion of this evidence is in Boyce 1968c:36 f.

<sup>17</sup> See references in Lecture 2, note 1.

The other Younger Avestan texts, where references to cosmogony and eschatology are more visible, belong to an indeterminate period. They most probably received their final shape by early Parthian times. Since knowledge of the ancient languages was more or less extinct, as far as we can tell, already in the late Achaemenian period, it seems unlikely that any substantial new composition of texts could have taken place long after the conclusion of Achaemenian rule. We have no direct proof of these chronological suppositions. The linguistic fabric of the other major Old Iranian language, Old Persian, shows signs of crumbling by the later Achaemenian period: the grammatical structure of the language was giving way to that typical of Middle Persian. It is reasonable to assume that a similar fate befell the East Iranian language in which the Avestan texts were formulated, although it is possible that Avestan, a different language, developed and eventually lost its vitality at a different pace than Old Persian.

We have in the Pahlavi books an account of creation which can be summarized in brief terms as follows. There were two independent eternal powers at the beginning. These were separate from each other and represented the two extreme poles: goodness as opposed to evil, wisdom as opposed to after-knowledge, light as opposed to darkness, fragrance as opposed to bad smell. As long as they were separate no problem presented itself, but the trouble started when the evil entity, called Ahreman, discovered the light of the deity Ohrmazd.

Counting among his traits of character also envy and restlessness, Ahreman could not abide it when he saw the light and goodness of Ohrmazd and sought to get to it, appropriate it, and bring destruction on it. Here is the root of the conflict. Ohrmazd has to have recourse to a stratagem. He offers Ahreman a gentleman's agreement, according to which they would conduct a duel for a specified period of time. Ahreman accepts this, and once he does, he is already doomed in eternity, although he still has a long period of dominion in time. The rest of the history of the world is conducted according to a rigidly predetermined timetable to which the devil, no less than God, has to adhere without being able to escape from it. This is not entirely in character with Ahreman—for among his constant epithets there is also deceit and the breaking of oath—but it is nevertheless one of the features of the story. Without acknowledging this principle, the whole cosmogony would be meaningless.

The determination of the course of time is associated with a definition of a restricted space, which is the created cosmos. This eventually serves as a trap and prison for Ahreman, although within it he feels free

to wreak havoc and inflict pain and hardship. The outcome is, somewhat paradoxically, that humanity is entrapped together with Ahreman in the world, although the role of humanity is in a sense to represent the deity in the arena of the material world, while the fate of Ahreman is to be confined to this prison-like structure, where he conducts the battle, but from which he cannot escape.

This account, which is based on the two major accounts extant in Pahlavi,<sup>18</sup> may be termed the 'classical' or 'orthodox' version of the Iranian cosmogony. These are mere epithets which I shall be using for convenience; they do not necessarily reflect any historical reality. We do not have any certainty that any of the conceptions to be discussed was more 'orthodox' than any other. The use of these epithets for the Sasanian period is merely a borrowing from later usage, from the Zoroastrian tradition of the medieval period. The fact that we are denying the legitimate notion of orthodoxy to any of the versions of the cosmogonical myth does not mean to say that no attempt was made to impose an orthodoxy on the Zoroastrian community. Quite to the contrary, there was during the Sasanian period some preoccupation with the problem of orthodoxy and heresy. The various authorities, religious and secular, strove to impose their form of faith as absolutely binding on all. And yet the situation was fluid. The number of variants recorded in the Islamic sources for the basic myths of creation is truly staggering. The definitive imposition of the mediaeval orthodoxy had not yet taken place in the Sasanian period. The differences do not concern merely minor details, but often have far-reaching theological consequences for the conception of the godhead and of the structure of the faith and touch on such central problems as monotheism or dualism, the origin and function of evil in the world, and other fundamental issues. Paradoxically perhaps, the very fact that heresy and orthodoxy are such obsessive terms for Sasanian writers may prove that the notion of orthodoxy was not yet an established idea with them. It is certainly not clearly focused: we are sometimes at a loss to make out a profile of a heretic from the various references to this hazy entity even in the Pahlavi writings.

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<sup>18</sup> The *Bundahishn* and the *Wizīdagthā ī Zādsparam*. A convenient, though not entirely reliable, transcription and translation of the relevant passages is in Zaehner 1955:276 ff. A selection from the former source is in Boyce 1984b:45 ff.

Let us come back to the 'orthodox' story of creation. The main elements of its implied theology are the following. There are two eternal powers or principles, independent of each other; their conflict constitutes the reason for the creation of the world by God; the world serves as a prison to the Evil Spirit; the conflict will only be resolved at the end of time.

Other Iranian statements concerning the creation of the world and the position of the two antagonistic spirits have different underlying conceptions. One such account, according to the great Islamic heresiographer, Shahrastānī,<sup>19</sup> gives pre-existent eternity only to light, and denies it to darkness; the latter 'was brought into being' in time.<sup>20</sup> It was, so to speak, created. For the authors of the late orthodoxy, as expressed in the Pahlavi books, this is of course sheer heresy. According to one version of this doctrine, the origin of Ahreman (who is referred to also as 'darkness', as a kind of proper name) is from an improper thought that occurred to Yazdān, i.e. to Ohrmazd. This unworthy thought is formulated as a question that God addresses to himself: 'If I had an antagonist, how would he be?'<sup>21</sup> For God to think of an entity is to bring it into being, and this is how Ahreman was forthwith created.<sup>22</sup>

An interesting formulation of the doctrine that evil originally sprang out of good, a doctrine that stands in contrast to the classical Zoroastrian faith, makes darkness the outcome of a portion of the light by a process of metamorphosis.<sup>23</sup>

One feature that comes up in various accounts of the story of creation is the presence of mediating angels, who step in to oversee the truce agreed upon between the two antagonists. They can be presumed to have had a measure of impartiality as required by their position. The existence of such a third party in the great dualistic conflict is striking,

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<sup>19</sup> A detailed discussion of Shahrastānī's account (with full translation) is in Shaked [forthcoming, a]. The paragraph numbers used in the following refer to my division of the text of Shahrastānī as used in that article.

<sup>20</sup> Shahrastānī §3.

<sup>21</sup> Shahrastānī §5, attributed to the 'Kayūmarthiyya'.

<sup>22</sup> This conception of the myth of origins is reported, among other sources, also by Bīrūnī (*Āthār*, 99), a good connoisseur of Iranian beliefs, who says: 'They [scil. the Persians] have said many strange things concerning the origins of the world and the fact that Ahriman, i.e. the devil, was born from a thought of God and from his taking pleasure in the world'.

<sup>23</sup> Shahrastānī §14.

and when it is formulated so explicitly and unequivocally it goes against the classical accounts of the story of creation, although it cannot be denied that there are hints, expressed in undertones, to a similar conception even in Pahlavi literature.<sup>24</sup>

Two telling details mark the deviation of the non-classical accounts from the 'orthodox' story. One is the talk of two moments in the history of the universe, not of three, as is stated quite dogmatically everywhere. Three stages in the history of the world is also the notion in the Manichaean sources, where it is a clear borrowing from Zoroastrianism. The three moments of Classical Zoroastrianism are the creation, the mixture, and the salvation. The two moments of these deviant accounts are 'mixture' and 'redemption'. The absence of the first element may indicate that the balanced existence of the two antagonists in the period before the mixture is denied in this deviant form of the myth.

The other detail is the number used for the duration of the world. According to the classical accounts the figure is a multiple of three, usually 9,000, but sometimes 12,000. In the accounts occurring in some Arabic sources a different number comes up: 7,000, a figure which may be associated with the number of the planets, but in any case does not lend itself to a division into three or four equal periods. In fact it seems that in contrast to the figures of nine or twelve thousand, the number seven thousand does not designate a compound time, made up of smaller units, but a single continuous period which marks the whole duration of the world's existence. This duration is defined in terms of the 'mixture', i.e. the world as consisting of good and evil inextricably mixed together and, in this rather pessimistic view, given over entirely to the dominion of Ahreman.

These two details, which may strike us at first as trifling, may thus be indicative of the more profound differences in conception between the upholders of what we have labelled the 'classical' account and those who adhere to other versions of the story of creation, which we shall call for the sake of convenience 'deviant'.

Where does Zurvan, the god of Time, who has drawn so much scholarly attention during the past decades, come in? Well, he occupies no place at all either in the 'classical' version of the creation myth or in

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<sup>24</sup> The mediating or judicial position of Mithra may be one of these hints, amplified in foreign literature, although in the Pahlavi writings Mithra is not given explicitly the position of a judge between the two powers. Another prominent mediating figure is Wāy, the deity of wind or air. See Shaked 1980, especially the concluding remarks, pp. 17 ff.

the 'deviant' one we have just recounted. Not that time, with a small 't' does not figure as an element in the stories; of course it does, and it is rather important. In Pahlavi it figures usually under the name *zamān*. Even the deity Zurvan is not entirely absent from the Pahlavi books; but he plays, as a deity, no role in this particular story. On the other hand, he does figure quite prominently in other versions of the creation myth, to which we shall turn our attention presently.

Shahrestānī introduces his section on what he terms 'Zurwāniyya', a term designating for him adherents of doctrines associated with Zurwān, with the following words: 'Light brought forth persons of light, all of them spiritual, luminous and divine. But the greatest person, whose name was Zurwān, doubted in something, and from that doubt there came into being Ahreman the Satan'.<sup>25</sup> According to this, there is a certain lineage that goes down from 'Light', a term usually designating in Shahrestānī's account Ohrmazd, to a group of persons of light, of which Zurwān was the greatest, to Ahreman, who sprang from a doubt occurring in the mind of Zurwān. This account seems to make Ahreman an offspring of Ohrmazd at one remove away, and it makes Zurwān a 'person of light', one of a group, all descendants of Ohrmazd. This is a variant on the story, already referred to above, according to which Ahreman is a direct descendant of Ohrmazd, and there too he came into being as a result of a question addressed by Ohrmazd to himself, that is to say, an expression of doubt.

According to another version of the story, again recounted by Shahrestānī as well as by several other sources—Armenian, Syriac and Arabic—both Ohrmazd and Ahreman were born from Zurwān: the former from the sacrifice of Zurwān, the latter from the doubt that occurred in his mind as to the efficacy of the sacrifice.<sup>26</sup> In another version of this Zurvanite myth Evil was always there with God, but at a given moment Evil separated from Zurwān;<sup>27</sup> the reason for that is not specified in the text.

It is interesting to note that the Zurvanite myth seems on the whole to conform more to the structure of the 'classical' myth of creation than to that of the 'deviant' myth. It will be remembered that we pointed out the existence of two seemingly minor details distinguishing the deviant myth from its classical counterpart: the use of the number 7,000 against

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<sup>25</sup> Shahrestānī §7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* §8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* §10.



9,000 or 12,000; and the division of the time of the universe into two instead of three moments. The Zurvanite myth in Shahrastānī's version talks explicitly of nine thousand (and perhaps also of twelve thousand) years, and it seems to accept implicitly the notion of three cosmic moments. In one further detail it deviates from the classical account: it speaks of angels mediating between the two powers. It adds at this point a specific detail: when the treaty between the two antagonists was concluded, they handed over their swords to two reliable witnesses—their names and functions are not specified—who are depositories of the swords. If one of the parties is false to his word, he will be killed by these swords.<sup>28</sup>

It may be in place to make a further point concerning the myth of Zurvan. It has been often said that Zurvanism marks an attenuation of the dualistic theology of Zoroastrianism, but this may not reflect the way in which those who upheld the myth of Zurvan viewed it. We thus have in an Armenian source a piece of 'Zurvanite' polemic against Christians, in which the dualistic point of view is vigorously stated, and the same is true of passages in Syriac literature where the Zurvan myth is represented.<sup>29</sup> This may show that the so-called Zurvanites were not monotheistically inclined Zoroastrians, but simply Zoroastrians, and perforce dualists, who handed down a different version of the creation story.

This does not exhaust the list of permutations of the myth of creation. One version of that myth makes Ahreman an independent eternal deity, who lived in darkness, in air, in empty space; this is the place to which he will be hurled back at the end of times. In this story the air is not the neutral no-man's-land that it is in the classical version, but the abode of evil. When we translate this into the language of Iranian mythology, we may infer from this detail that Wāy, the younger name of the Avestic deity Vayu, was considered in a certain version of the creation myth as a receptacle of evil. According to this version the evil spirit got into the domain of God before creation, a detail that clearly goes against the spirit and letter of the 'classical' version; only after that infiltration of God's domain by Ahreman did God create the world as a snare for him. Thus the story of the Evil Spirit in this version, although it resembles in

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* §11.

<sup>29</sup> *Elise Vasn vardanats'*, p.25 ff.; tr. Orbeli and Juzbashjan, p. 40 ff.; tr. Thomson, p. 78 ff. Cf. the corresponding version of Eznik, *De deo*, 460 f. (text), 597 f. (translation), where this point does not occur.

several points the classical cosmogony, contains certain divergent details that put it apart from the classical story.

We have not attempted to give here a complete presentation of all the minute differences that exist between the several versions of the stories of creation,<sup>30</sup> but what we have seen should give us a pretty good idea of the great diversity that existed. Most of this material is culled from Shahrastānī's account, and one could easily fill in further details from other sources. Arabic-language writers like Shahrastānī and 'Abd al-Jabbār did not invent these details. Nor can it be claimed that they were generally so ignorant, or so disdainful of the material they were reporting, as to have committed serious errors in their transmission. They were for the most part of Persian extraction. Shahrastānī, like several other Islamic writers, is obviously at pains to present all details in the most accurate manner possible, and he adds his own doubts and scruples about the material which he transmits. He presents one version after another, even where the differences between them are trifling, with the apparent desire to be as complete and true to his material as he possibly can. His criticism of views that must have sounded very offensive to the ears of a Muslim is expressed in brief words and does not overshadow the presentation. One may well assume that there were several further, unrecorded, varieties of these stories, and that those reported by the non-Zoroastrian writers are merely an accidental selection from the ideas current among Zoroastrians.

Some varieties of cosmogony are found even in the Pahlavi books, despite the general impression of uniformity that one gets from them, representing as they do just one strain of tradition. One peculiar version occurs in the *Pahlavi Rivayāt accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*. It tells of the world as being created from a 'body', which is not specified, and it has been argued that we have there a conception influenced by the Indian myth of Purusha. For this there is no evidence, and indeed it is not clear from that account that the world is created from the body of a primal man at all; it is quite as likely that there was some kind of form made in the beginning, from which the world was later created, or that the world was first created as an essential entity in Ohrmazd, and later transferred to its *gētīg*, or material, shape. This interpretation, if it is accepted, would make it very close to the *mēnōg-gētīg* version of the story of creation. The term *tan* 'body', at any rate, does not necessarily

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<sup>30</sup> This was done in Shaked 1992b and in forthcoming, a.

denote a material entity. Be it as it may, we do have here a different conception of the process of creation.<sup>31</sup>

The conclusion from these diverse accounts seems straightforward. In the period under question, that is to say, towards the end of the Sasanian period and in the early centuries of Islam, there reigned considerable tolerance in the matter of how one should formulate the mythology of creation. We have no way of telling which version was accepted by the political establishment of the Empire (and indeed we do not know whether there was an officially endorsed version). We do know however that besides school variations within the religion, there was also considerable divergence among the different regions of the vast Iranian domain. We have clear evidence for that from the practice of the Manichaeans, who used different sets of divine names to render their own story of creation in the various Iranian languages spoken in different regions,<sup>32</sup> but we shall not be concerned with this type of variation.

We have direct and sometimes indirect evidence for other divergencies in theogonical and cosmogonical views which can occasionally be deduced from the wording of Pahlavi passages.<sup>33</sup>

The Zurvanite myth occurs very frequently in foreign accounts of religious debates in the Sasanian period, and it seems that it was the self-evident representation of the common Sasanian idea of the beginnings of the universe as most contemporary Christian polemicists and martyrs understood it. As many of them were of Iranian extraction who had been Zoroastrians before their conversion, they can very well be regarded as native informants for Sasanian Zoroastrianism. Given the near universal acceptance of Zurvanism, it would seem to be a contradiction in terms to speak of a Zurvanite heresy in the Sasanian period. If it was, at least some of the time, the dominant form of the religion, it was in effect the orthodoxy of the time, and could not be at the same time a heresy. Besides, it does not seem justified to call it a heretical sect if it had no organized existence which would set it apart

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<sup>31</sup> *PRiv* 46; cf. Williams 1985; 1990 II:72 ff., 202 ff., where the chapter is discussed in detail, and references to previous literature are given. For the notion of *tan* cf. Lecture 3.

<sup>32</sup> On the Manichaean designations of the deities see the convenient brief summary in Tardieu 1981:103 ff. Cf. also Boyce 1975b:8 ff.

<sup>33</sup> See Cumont 1908:63 ff., where it is pointed out, among other things, that certain Zoroastrian texts seem to confuse between the figure of Gayomard, the Primal Man, and a solar figure such as Mithra.

from an established form of the religion. It would be wrong for scholars to declare one form of the faith orthodox, that is to say, the correct faith. All expressions of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian period seem to have referred back to the scriptures and their *zand*, while they belonged to a period and environment widely remote from that of Zoroaster; we are in no position to measure their proximity to the words of the founder. The claims made by various schools within Christianity, Judaism or Islam to constitute the most faithful reflection of the primitive religion have only subjective validity. There is no reason to suppose that in Zoroastrianism the situation could be different, and that there exists but one school where the thought of its founder is preserved in its pristine purity, while all others are mere deviations from that.

The link connecting these different cosmogonical conceptions is dualism,<sup>34</sup> which for our practical purposes means the idea that there are two cosmic powers that are separate from an early stage in the existence of the universe.<sup>35</sup> We have seen three basic models in Iran for accounting for the existence of the power of evil: it is regarded as a completely separate principle, independent of the deity, from the origins; it occurs, alternatively, as parallel to the good deity, the differentiation between them taking place within a pre-existent and neutral deity of time, thus creating a triangular model of the divine world; or it is deemed to be secondary to God, even explicitly as derived from him, by way of transformation from or corruption of the Entity of Light. The first and the third alternatives use a model of a neat contrast between the two powers, though they are differently conceived. The second, 'Zurvanite', model uses a conception of three divine figures. This would seem to be a significant difference, but a much more important distinction can be made between the first two conceptions on the one

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<sup>34</sup> On the notion and forms of dualism cf. the numerous studies of Bianchi, in particular 1958a; 1958b; 1961; 1971; 1973. Cf. also Pètremont 1946; 1947.

<sup>35</sup> I am using a rough-and-ready definition of dualism. As with most problems of religious typology, it is not easy to give a tight and methodically satisfactory definition that would be universally applicable. The reasons for this are, as I shall try to show, that dualism is so closely tied to monotheism that the two are practically inextricable, and the difference between them is essentially one of degree, rather than of quality. It would not do to employ a definition such as that used by Kellens 1990:14, who puts two conditions for a religious system to be called dualistic: that the dualism be of a cosmic order; and that the evil element should be directly opposed to the good. This would rule out practically all dualistic systems known to us.

hand and the third one on the other: the first two views are based on a neat contrast between good and evil, and on the impossibility of deriving the one from the other; the third differs from them in that it allows evil to be derived from good, and in this sense it is more radically at variance with the other two than they are from each other. All three had their Sasanian adherents. Each was regarded as orthodox by some Zoroastrians, who would have defended it as the most satisfactory solution to the problem of evil.

I should like to conclude with three brief observations on the typology and phenomenology of dualism. It has already been observed that a religion that is based on ethical dualism cannot really uphold a symmetry of the two powers.<sup>36</sup> They may be parallel up to a point for the purposes of the narrative, but the difference between good and evil, between God and the devil, is too profound to allow them to be on the same plane of existence. Thus we have various expressions for their lack of symmetry. In the Pahlavi books this is expressed by the frequent formula that Ohrmazd exists, while Ahreman is non-existent;<sup>37</sup> by the inequality of their knowledge and wisdom, which denotes their inequality of power;<sup>38</sup> as well as by the difference between them as to space and time. Theoretically both are considered to be unlimited as to the dimensions of space and time, but when we come to details we see that they are not. In space Ohrmazd spreads over all directions with the exception of downwards, while Ahreman occupies only that one direction; in time they may be both eternally pre-existent, but this is not true with regard to their end, where one, Ohrmazd, will continue eternally to exist and to reign, while the other will be either annihilated or put away: the expressions as to the fate of Ahreman at the end of times are embarrassingly ambiguous and even contradictory.

The second point is the following. We find in these Iranian texts very often an intrusion of a third principle that seems to disturb the harmony of dualism. I believe that this is not a logical flaw or an oversight on the part of the Zoroastrian believers, but a widespread feature of a dualistic type of thinking. There are several mediating figures in Sasanian

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<sup>36</sup> Henning 1951:47 ff.; Shaked 1967.

<sup>37</sup> Shaked 1967. Recently Gnoli has shown that the same conception applies also to the Younger Avesta, and that a premonition of it may already exist in the Gathas (in a yet unpublished communication to the second conference of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* in Bamberg, October 1991).

<sup>38</sup> See an analysis of this point in Cerutti 1990:33 f.

Zoroastrianism, beginning with the figure of Mithra (Mihr) as a mediator judge; the mediating angels mentioned in the Arabic sources,<sup>39</sup> who may or may not be identical with Mihr and his associates; the deity Wāy as a middle principle between the two powers in the Bundahishn account; and the deity Zurvan in the Zurvanite version of the story, who stands above, and in a certain sense between, the two powers.<sup>40</sup> The structural function of such figures who stand in-between is to mitigate the stark harshness of the dualistic system, to lend to it a certain roundness, and perhaps to make the theoretical model of the divine world conform a little more to the reality of the world we live in, which is not just a world of black-and-white, of light-and-darkness.

The third point is that despite the effort at making a neat distinction between good and evil, a certain ambiguity in the character and function of the chief protagonists cannot entirely be avoided. We have a number of indications for ethical and ontological ambiguities that spoil the absolute separation of good and evil. To give just a few examples. Death is a creation of Ahreman, but it is said to carry advantages within it.<sup>41</sup> Sexual desire is instilled in men as a sinister corruption devised by Ahreman, but the whole scheme of the world is based on the benefits accruing from that to mankind and to the creation of Ohrmazd.<sup>42</sup> The myth of creation is based on an implicit assumption that the devil, Ahreman, is true to his word: once he has concluded an agreement with

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<sup>39</sup> See above and Shaked 1992b.

<sup>40</sup> See Shaked 1980:19 f., where the point is worked out in more detail.

<sup>41</sup> Cf *PRiv* chapter 13.

<sup>42</sup> The Primal Whore, Jeh, requests of Ahreman the desire for men, which Ahreman is unable to withhold from her, although he knows full well that this means the perpetuation of mankind, to which he is opposed. Cf. *GBd* 41:5 ff.; Anklesaria 1956:46 ff. The text is transcribed and translated in Zaehner 1955: 355 ff.

Ohrmazd, he is incapable of breaking it.<sup>43</sup> This is a necessary element of the story, but is out of character. There is a range of ambivalent figures in Zoroastrian mythology which break the clear-cut division between the two camps. It appears that some prominent members of the pantheon have a sinister aspect to their person. This is apparent for example in the figures of Yima (Jamshēd),<sup>44</sup> or Keresāspa,<sup>45</sup> not to speak of a divine figure like Vayu (Wāy) which occupies an ambiguous position between the two powers, and had to be split into two in order to preserve the dualistic structure without allowing it to be strained beyond what it can take.<sup>46</sup>

One further point is of a historical nature. At what period of time in the history of Zoroastrianism did the theologians feel themselves consciously and proudly the upholders of a dualistic point of view, against most of the rest of the world? It does not seem at all certain that Zoroaster regarded himself as a dualist, not only because the word, or any equivalent to it, does not occur in the Gathas or elsewhere in the Avesta, but also because the conflict of two divine figures is not very prominent in the Gathas or in much of the Younger Avesta, with the clear exception of the *Vendidad*. The question as to the dualistic consciousness of the Zoroastrians is not identical with the question as to how we ought to describe the religion of Zoroaster. The religious message of Zoroaster is without hesitation a dualism, for it is founded on the existence of two antagonistic powers. It may however be argued that there is no attestation of a declared dualistic stand before the Sasanian period. Even in the inscriptions of the early Sasanians we have no clear reference to a definition of the religion of the king and the state as a system of faith which is based on the clash between two cosmic powers. Only in the *Vidēvdāt* and in the Pahlavi writings is a clear dualist ideology expressed, with the Mazdean religion defined as standing against that of the *dēws*. Yet even in the Pahlavi books it is not

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<sup>43</sup> This comes about more than once in the story of creation. Consider, for example, the scene in which Ahreman falls in stupefaction having realized that he has signed his own doom by agreeing to a time-limit set on his fight with Ohrmazd (*GBd* 7:11; Anklesaria 1956:10 f.); or the scene in which Ahreman is bound to grant Jeh her wish, since he has promised it to her, although he knows the disastrous effects of that for him (*GBd* 41; Anklesaria 1956:48 f.).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Shaked 1987c.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *PRiv* 18f:3 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Shaked 1980:20.

always predominant.<sup>47</sup> It is possible to assume that the proud declaration of Zoroastrianism as a dualistic faith, and the assertion that dualism is the only satisfactory form of religion, may have come about at the end of a long period of contacts and polemics with Jews and later with Christians, and under the impetus of rivalry with other dualistic ideologies, such as Manichaeism.<sup>48</sup>

W.B.Henning described the dualism of Zoroaster as the only logical answer to the problems of the universe, 'more satisfying to the thinking mind than the one given by the author of the Book of Job'.<sup>49</sup> Without wishing to take sides in the debate whether dualism or monotheism (or any other type of religion) provides the best solution to the religious needs of man, I hope to have shown that as a living historical entity Zoroastrian dualism in the Sasanian period does not exactly present a straightforward logical answer. Henning himself helped us realize that dualism is by no means a conception of a symmetrical opposition of two powers. Our investigation has shown that the problem of evil, to which dualism should provide the answer, is capable of several different modes of solution within a dualistic system, and that this may by itself indicate a certain *malaise* with the reply provided by the dualistic faith.

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<sup>47</sup> Not all the Zoroastrian creeds have seen fit to include a reference to the dualism of the faith. Thus, when one ties the *kustīg*, one is supposed to tie four knots that correspond to the four basic tenets of the faith. These are the existence of God, the acknowledgement of the Zoroastrian religion, the prophecy of Zoroaster, and one's intention of using the threefold mode of good behaviour, viz. good thought, good speech and good deeds (cf. *SD* 10:9). The choice of these points in the declaration of faith, with no reference to the repudiation of the demons, seems significant in showing that this is not central in all expressions of the faith. This observation stands in contrast to the fact that the *kustīg* is closely tied to the idea of the fight against the demons (for this see Spiegel 1860:327 ff.; Christensen 1934:65 ff.). It may indicate that this ritual declaration belongs to an earlier period, despite the very late date of the book in which it occurs. On the other hand, in the modern period there is a trend to ignore the dualistic character of the religion or to play it down. Thus, in the creed written by Modi (1961), there is no reference at all to the dualistic elements of the faith.

<sup>48</sup> The suggestion that disputes with Judaism may have helped to develop the dualistic awareness of Zoroastrians is made in Shaked 1990b. The dualistic point comes out forcefully in Plutarch's description of the Iranian religion, *de Iside* 46 f., but it is not clear whether this is based on Zoroastrian self-awareness, or on Greek doxology.

<sup>49</sup> Henning 1951:46.



Typologically, dualism can hardly be considered a separate category of religion. Its kinship with monotheism is so close as to make it necessary to assume that dualism comes into existence only as an intensification of a trait inherent in every monotheism. Monotheism, by its concentration of the cosmic power in the figure of a single divine entity, has to grapple with the problem of evil much more acutely than a polytheistic system, and it must provide an answer which places evil somewhere along the line that leads from God to the cosmos. Every monotheism is, in this sense, a dualism. Every dualism, by the fact that it tends to place evil on a somewhat lower level than God, is, in reality, a monotheism. The difference between them is one of degree, of intensity, of emphasis, not of substance.

Dualism in its historical manifestation appears to be a complex phenomenon, not merely a juxtaposition of two powers set in opposition to each other. It may come as a disappointment to notice that it contains some ambiguities, but on the other hand it may give us satisfaction to understand it not as an abstract philosophical system, but as a three-dimensional historical reality, with all the inconsistencies and uncertainties that this may be expected to entail.

## II

# Eschatology and Vision

WHAT was the situation like with regard to eschatology in the Sasanian period? Whatever the precise origins of evil, the problem of its existence in the world must find here its ultimate solution. The representation of the events of the end of times form therefore in Zoroastrianism a logical concomitant to that of the origins of the world. The problem about investigating this field is that the material concerning eschatology is even more nebulous than that which deals with cosmogony.

There can be little doubt that the eschatological conceptions are quite old in Zoroastrianism. They have their origins, indeed, in the Gathas of Zarathushtra,<sup>1</sup> but the question as to when each individual trait in this complex of ideas made its first appearance in Iran is not easy to answer.

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<sup>1</sup> Kellens (1987b; Kellens and Pirart 1988/91) has denied the existence of Gathic eschatology. In his latest article (Kellens, forthcoming), he seems to accept individual eschatology, but not notions of collective or universal eschatology in the Gathas. This seems also to be the position of Humbach, who in the introduction to his most recent book (1991) makes no allusion to eschatology. According to this approach the Gathas are understood as ritual texts, their terminology to be interpreted from the usage of the Vedic texts. Such an approach, though it has its merits (as evidenced by Kellens and Pirart 1988/91), may cause significant aspects of the text to be lost. As an exercise in exegesis, it is possible to read the Book of Genesis merely as a branch of ancient Mesopotamian literature, a method that was actually pursued by some scholars. Much is gained on the lexical side, but the special brand of religious feeling and thought of the book, as well as the sense of continuity from Genesis to later Jewish literature, are lost. A religious tradition, it should be remembered, often uses old terminology while groping towards new contents. Novel ideas are frequently expressed by old phraseology that is made to adapt to a new communal experience. For the Gathas, one should bear in mind the possibility that the sanctioned ancient language of ritual may no longer have reflected the reality of the new Zarathushtrian religion. To bring again a Jewish analogy:

In previous publications<sup>2</sup> I tried to prove the relative antiquity in Iran of the large conceptions of eschatology by using a somewhat schematic logical argument. The eschatological events comprise certain instances of duplication of events, such as the double occurrence of individual eschatology as well as its universal counterpart; the existence of apocalyptic visions, which deal with the ultimate history of the world, alongside the eschatology that is concerned with the world beyond. Since such duplication of events, with all the incoherence that it entails, is attested in Iranian<sup>3</sup> as well as in late Jewish<sup>4</sup> eschatology, it is difficult to assume that the two systems developed independently of each other. The apparent confusion and duplication makes little sense in the Jewish tradition, while in Iran there is an acceptable and indeed compelling structural explanation that helps put this chaotic mass of material into order. The key to explaining these doublets in Iran seems to be the duality of notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg*.

Certain scholars, among them Flusser, Boyce, and Hultgård,<sup>5</sup> have recently treated various problems arising from the comparison of Iranian and Judaeo-Christian notions in this field, and have generally inclined to accept the idea that there was in Iran a body of well-developed eschatological faith before Judaism evolved its own version. Other scholars have expressed strong scepticism with regard to this position.<sup>6</sup> In this connection we need not go into the details of these questions, as we are interested in describing the situation prevailing

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synagogue liturgy uses even today the language of temple sacrifice that was suspended some two thousand years ago. It is advisable to strike a balance between two extreme positions: between, on the one hand, regarding the Gathas as provincial Vedic texts, and, on the other, reading the whole of later Zoroastrianism into them.

<sup>2</sup> Shaked 1970a; 1971.

<sup>3</sup> The whole complexity of eschatology is only found in the late Pahlavi literature.

<sup>4</sup> That is to say, in writings from the first century B.C.E. onwards.

<sup>5</sup> Flusser 1972; 1982. Boyce 1984; 1989. Hultgård 1979; 1983.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Gignoux 1985/88; 1986a; 1986b. Barr 1985.

during the Sasanian period, a time by which Zoroastrian eschatology and apocalyptic were already well-developed and well-established.<sup>7</sup>

The eschatological ideas are expressed in some detail in the main Pahlavi books. As a handy source of comparative material we also have the eschatological notions of Manichaeism, where some Zoroastrian notions, as well as ideas deriving from other sources and from Mani's own fertile religious imagination, seem to have been merged.

The period with which we are concerned in this connection, that of the Sasanian dynasty, is one in which eschatology in general and apocalypticism in particular were already recognized themes within Zoroastrian literature.<sup>8</sup> We cannot be quite sure of the detailed contents of these conceptions in the Sasanian period, as the original material is practically all lost and what remains of it is a late reworking made by the authors of the Pahlavi books of the 9th–10th centuries.<sup>9</sup> There can however be no reasonable ground to doubt that far from being an innovation of the post-Sasanian period, the eschatological complex is indeed a feature of the Sasanian period from the start.

Perhaps the most balanced survey of the apocalyptic material in Pahlavi was done by Hultgård. I can quote his conclusion as to the age of this literature without reservation: 'The way in which the contents of this framework [of Pahlavi texts in which apocalyptic material is embedded] and of these independent [apocalyptic] texts are presented makes it clear that we are dealing with summaries, selections or compilations of earlier traditions which have, however, been reworked to fit the time of the post-Sasanian redactors'.<sup>10</sup> Hultgård goes on to enumerate the various formulae which serve to introduce the

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<sup>7</sup> Gignoux seems to deny partly even this, assigning as he does the whole of the apocalyptic literature to the Islamic period. The existence of apocalyptic elements strongly reminiscent of Iranian apocalyptic literature in the works of the Christian church father Aphrem, who worked in the fourth century on the border of the Sasanian empire, would show that these motifs were current at that time, and that such scepticism is ill-founded; cf. Widengren 1984:17 f.

<sup>8</sup> The term is used here in a loose sense. It does not necessarily indicate a written corpus, but rather a body of organized tradition, which may well have been predominantly oral rather than written.

<sup>9</sup> As will be seen further on, from Pahlavi compositions only extant in Arabic transmission, evidence is available of eschatological notions current in the Sasanian period.

<sup>10</sup> Hultgård 1983:391. I have added the words in brackets to make the intention of the author clearer. Cf. Hultgård 1991 for his discussion of Bahman Yasht.

apocalyptic material in Pahlavi, and which most often make explicit reference to Avestan material, formulae such as: *pad dēn gōwēd*, 'He (i.e. Ohrmazd) <sup>11</sup> says in the scriptures'. It is possible, of course, to dismiss such formulae on one of two grounds:

(1) By claiming that they are pious frauds, imputing to the Avesta, and even explicitly to Ohrmazd himself, the thoughts of later generations. This is somewhat unlikely, as the compositions were meant to be read by learned people, who might have had access to the scriptures themselves, and who could see through such forgeries. It is not common to find fraudulent imputation of material to the scriptures in other religions, when there is an established canon of sacred writings with which the learned are familiar. In the case of Zoroastrianism, as in the case of most other bodies of religious traditions, knowledge of the scriptures was oral, and quotations from them were made from memory; that meant that in a case of doubt recourse to the original scripture was not by way of consulting a manuscript, but by checking the memory of trustworthy learned priests. The analogy of the composition of the pseudepigrapha in the Jewish and Christian tradition is not valid here, for those were special works, which themselves relied on the existence of a well-established corpus of scriptures.

(2) By assuming that this is *zand*, that is to say, not necessarily a text that transmits the exact wording of the original, but a growing body of traditional commentary and amplification of the original text. In the nature of things the contents and wording of such *zand* sections were not rigidly and immutably fixed; they could develop with time and could change from one school to another, from one region to another. It may thus be reasonably claimed that we cannot be sure that what we read in the *zand* sections is an accurate rendering of the corresponding Avesta passages. This is, on the face of it, a grave objection to the use of this material as evidence for the antiquity of the apocalyptic material. In defence of this material it may however be argued that a tradition is unlikely to read apocalypticism into Avestan texts even if nothing of the kind existed in them. This is certainly not impossible. Analogies for such a process taking place in other religions are available, but one should presume that a tradition contains a measure of credibility when it is so persistent, unless the contrary can be proved to be the case. The silence of the surviving fragmentary corpus of Avestan material on this subject cannot serve as proof. For the period in which we are interested, at any

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<sup>11</sup> Or the anonymous author of the tradition.

rate, the *zand* tradition may safely be used, I believe, as indicating the existence of this material as part of the Sasanian corpus.

We may take it for granted that the identification of the usually cryptic Avestan allusions with specific future events is the work of late authors. The process of bringing an ancient text up to date by reading into it contemporary knowledge of events is familiar from the Jewish *midrash* and from its Christian counterparts. This would however normally be an edifice built on a tradition of interpretation, and would as a rule not be an arbitrary innovation. The midrashic distortions of the text have their own range of possibilities, their own grammar, which defines what is applicable and excludes that which is not.

On the basis of such considerations it is possible to use as a working hypothesis that the apocalyptic material is essentially of Avestan origins, or at least firmly embedded in the tradition of Avestan interpretation, although it is impossible to be sure about a given detail whether it is indeed much older than the date of the late redaction of the text in which it occurs.

Even if we accept, as I think we should, that the roots of this literature are in essence Avestan, the question as to the dating of the Avestan material is not unequivocally settled. In any case, given the fact that knowledge of the Avestan dialect was on the decline already by the late Achaemenian and early Parthian period, it does not seem likely that much Avestan material was composed after that time.<sup>12</sup>

Our faith in the antiquity of the apocalyptic material in Iran is enhanced by considering what survives of the work called the *Oracles of Hystaspes*. This work, which exists only in excerpts quoted by Lactantius,<sup>13</sup> pretends to be a reflection of an Iranian work. Even if we are inclined to regard this attribution as pseudepi-graphic, it is not likely that such an attribution would be made without knowledge that such a literary genre was current in Iran. As it happens, an analysis of the contents of this book suggests that certain elements in it are of Iranian origin.<sup>14</sup> This, in addition to the fact that there exists a whole range of Iranian works belonging to the same genre and defined as *zand* of

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<sup>12</sup> This point is also made, in a different context, by Boyce 1968c:38. A survey of the development of eschatological and apocalyptic ideas from the extant portions of the Avesta to the Pahlavi books is in Colpe 1981:544 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Div. inst.*; cf. Bidez and Cumont 1938, II:364–376.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bidez and Cumont 1938; Flusser 1982; Widengren 1983:121 ff.; Hultgård 1983; Boyce and Grenet 1991:376 ff.

Avestan passages, makes Iranian apocalypticism a presence that needs strong evidence to refute.

Let us examine the eschatological beliefs of the Sasanian Zoroastrians. As in the field of cosmogony, here too there seems to have existed a certain latitude of possibilities. There obviously was a fairly wide range of formulations. A Muslim witness of the ninth century, Maqdisī, who seems to possess a wealth of precious information, says the following:

Many of the Magians affirm that there will be resurrection and the rising of the dead. One of the Magians of Fārs informed me: When the reign of Ahreman will come to an end, and the rule (of the world) will turn over to Ohrmazd, toil, distress, darkness, death, sickness and loathsomeness will be extinguished (from the world). The whole of mankind will become spiritual, permanent, eternal, in constant luminosity and constant repose; but I do not know the (different) opinions of their sects and the divergent opinions and utterances which they maintain. I have heard one of them say: When the world will have concluded nine thousand (years), the stars will fall down and the mountains will crumble and water will be scarce, these several frightful things will take place.<sup>15</sup>

The contents of the eschatology recounted here is largely in agreement with the 'orthodox' view of the Pahlavi sources, but the author is clearly aware of divergencies in the subject of eschatology. The span of the world's existence as given here is that familiar from the Pahlavi sources, nine thousand years. We have seen that other Arabic accounts<sup>16</sup> reflect additional streams of Iranian tradition.

Resurrection must have been a doctrine that caused considerable difficulty to many Zoroastrian believers, as it did in Judaism of the period. We notice the careful phrasing in Maqdisī: 'many of the Magians affirm' the resurrection, which implies that this was not universally accepted. I believe we have a similar allusion to uncertainty or to a debate over this question in a fragment of creed transmitted through Muslim channels. The formula of that creed runs as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> Maqdisī, *Bad'* II:143.

<sup>16</sup> See Lecture 1, p. 18.

I am free from doubt concerning the existence of Ohrmazd and of the Amahraspands; I am free from doubt concerning the Resurrection.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the Resurrection is singled out for assertion in such a short creed seems to indicate that it was an item of faith that needed particular affirmation. That it was a hard doctrine to swallow is also evident from the fact that Pahlavi literature carries frequent arguments proving its possibility. 'How is the Resurrection possible?' is the question that Zoroaster puts to Ohrmazd. If one believes in the creation of the world, the text says in reply, faith in the Resurrection is easier. It was far more difficult to create the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars, corn and other plants, with their colours, smells and tastes, and with the fire that is inherent in them, the child in the womb, the birds in the air, water and clouds, than it will be to re-create all these things at the time of the Resurrection. It is easier to revise something known and forgotten than to learn some new thing never known before.<sup>18</sup>

The inordinate attention paid to this problem, and the effort made to convince us that faith in the Resurrection is not absurd, seems to indicate that in the eyes of many people this was a subject fraught with difficulties, if not simply embarrassing.<sup>19</sup> During the Sasanian period

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<sup>17</sup> *bē-gumān hum pa hastī* <i> hurmuz u pa mahraspandān, *bē-gumān hum pa ristāxēz* (Maqdisī, *baḏ* 1:62 f.). I have normalized the transcription so as to try and reflect early New Persian.

<sup>18</sup> These arguments are summarized and compressed from *PRiv* 52:1 and *Dd* 36:3. A much longer version of the discussion is in *GBd* 121:12 ff., for which cf. Bailey 1943:93 f.; Molé 1963:113 f.; Widengren 1983:141 ff. A similar kind of argument is in *Zs* 34. A collection of texts is in Molé 1963:113 ff. Cf. also Williams 1990, II:243, for further references.

<sup>19</sup> Not only in Sasanian Iran was there intensive discussion of the Resurrection as a theme that needed defending and justifying. Aphrahat uses exactly the same arguments that the Zoroastrians used to prove the possibility of Resurrection. Cf. Aphrahat, *Dem.* VIII:6, 369–372. The Church Fathers devoted a great deal of energy to explaining it; see Wolfson 1961. In Judaism too the topic of resurrection was under attack around the beginning of the current era. It was introduced in a prominent position, as the second of the prescribed eighteen blessings, into the main daily prayer, the *Amida*, and a section of the Mishna (*Sanhedrin* 10:1) makes the point that those who deny the Resurrection will be denied a share in the world to come. This surely indicates that it was not universally endorsed. A short discussion of the *Sanhedrin* text is in Urbach 1979:652. Marmorstein 1950:146 ff. describes the polemics around the subject in Jewish history.



faith in the hereafter in general seems to have undergone a profound crisis, or was at least the subject of a great deal of pondering and debate.

Among the symptoms of that crisis is the fact that Kirdēr regards the problem of the hereafter as important enough to be mentioned at some length in his rock inscriptions. Ardā Wirāz, the literary hero of the Sasanian composition bearing his name, is made to explore the truth about the afterworld at what seems to be taken as considerable personal risk to himself. The theme of the hereafter is treated with a zeal and intensity that may suggest that this was not a self-evident doctrine. At the outset one may suppose one of two possibilities: it could be either just getting into circulation and needing a lot of convincing in order to establish it in the minds of people; or it could be an old and shaky item of faith, in danger of being completely abandoned. The first possibility is clearly untenable. The eschatological ideas were no longer a novelty in the Sasanian period. Faith in the Resurrection, for example, is attested in the Younger Avesta and must have existed in Zoroastrianism long before the Sasanians.<sup>20</sup> There must be another reason for this great surge of interest in and debate about the problems of the hereafter.

A historical analogy may help in gauging the significance of this preoccupation. The eschatological theme is very prominent at various stages of the Jewish and Christian faith during the Middle Ages, when it is an old element of the traditional religion. It is incorporated into the list of the thirteen items of faith by Maimonides, presumably as a demonstration of adherence to this somewhat controversial idea; for it was undoubtedly questionable, for example, from the philosophical point of view which Maimonides adopted. At certain points of time in Christian history scenes from the Last Judgement, the joys of heaven and more prominently the afflictions of Hell, are portrayed in religious art in a conspicuous manner, again apparently in response to a challenge. This takes place, for example, in thirteenth century France,<sup>21</sup> partly perhaps in response to the great heretical movements of the period. One cannot, of course, deduce from such phenomena that eschatological faith is of late occurrence in Judaism or Christianity.

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<sup>20</sup> Yt 19:89. See Bailey 1943:118; Nyberg 1938:308 ff. Professor Boyce is of the opinion that the Resurrection is part of the original message of Zoroaster (Boyce and Grenet 1991:365 f.), a possibility which is supported by no direct evidence.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Mâle 1958:356 ff.

It has been claimed that the early Sasanians regarded themselves as heralding a new epoch in which a novel concept of Iran and of Iranian suzerainty was developed, and that the kings had an interest in establishing a state church and a new symbiosis of the religion and of state authority.<sup>22</sup> It may naturally follow from this that they would have been concerned to introduce, or re-introduce, such religious tenets that may have partly lost their grip, or that may have never yet been fully accepted, say, in the western regions of their kingdom. Among these the conceptions of the eschatological world would figure prominently. This would then quite nicely account for the increasing attention given to the eschatological theme in the Sasanian period, at least in its first phase. This hypothesis founders on the simple observation that the early kings make no reference to this topic. The eschatological theme is tackled not by the kings in their monumental inscriptions, but by the chief priest, Kirdēr, who may be suspected of having a personal and professional interest in proclaiming what for him were the main religious truths. A study of his eschatological vision may indeed be rewarding.<sup>23</sup>

Kirdēr tells of the extraordinary journey undertaken by him in order to verify the reports concerning heaven and hell. He makes ready for it through good deeds of various kinds.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Lecture 5 for references and for a fuller discussion of this thesis.

<sup>23</sup> The parallel texts of the inscriptions, with a translation, are available in Back 1978:384–489. Considerable advance in the understanding of the inscriptions was made by Skjærvø 1983 and MacKenzie 1989. The full inscriptions and a survey of interpretations are now conveniently available in Gignoux 1991. Of the literature dealing with the vision of Kirdēr particular mention may be further made of Gnoli 1979:423 ff.; Gignoux 1981; 1984; 1990; Gaube, in Calmeyer and Gaube 1985:49 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Of particular interest are the actions undertaken by him in preparation for the journey:

and I have made [for the name of ?] Shapur, the King of Kings, a ritual-and-formula, for the sake of the deeds of the gods and my own soul, so that I may become righteous,

In the course of his journey he is represented by a figure that reproduces his likeness (**xnglpy**). This figure is accompanied by a woman, probably the self, called in other texts *dēn*,<sup>25</sup> and by ‘deadly’ persons, inhabitants of the other world. The ‘deadly ones’ are those who recount the vision, in which he sees different scenes that are not quite easy to explain, partly because of the poor state of preservation of the inscriptions, and partly because some of the terminology used is unfamiliar to us.<sup>26</sup> The fragmentary state of the inscriptions makes it difficult to understand in detail the stages of the journey. The main point of interest of the inscription is the doubt and anxiety felt about the hereafter, and the ability of Kirdēr, through his piety and good deeds, to come to a vision of it and report what he has seen, for the edification of his contemporaries and the following generations. A very similar concern is expressed in the fictional book of Ardā Wirāz for the urge to describe the rewards of heaven and the torments of hell, with one significant difference: Ardā Wirāz used a narcotic to enter into the peculiar state which enabled him to undertake his journey to the hereafter, whereas Kirdēr seems not to have employed any such agent, apart from what he terms **’dwyn mxly**, which is most likely to be an allusion to a set of ritual activities.<sup>27</sup>

Two points ought to be stressed here. One concerns eschatology, and the other the notion of vision. The preoccupation of these Sasanian documents is exclusively with individual eschatology, and more particularly with the fate of the soul after death. Not a word is said about the fate of the world or of humanity as a collective entity. Is the explanation for this to be sought in the accidental circumstances of the survival of certain literary monuments and the loss of others? Or in the assumption that Kirdēr was personally uninterested in the subject? Such explanations, though not impossible, strike us as unlikely.

Could we say that notions of universal eschatology were not yet developed or known in Iran? If this latter assumption were accepted, one would have to conclude that they entered Zoroastrian thinking at a later stage, probably under Jewish and Christian influence. This

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where the two expressions, ‘for the sake of the deeds of the gods’ and ‘(for the sake of) my own soul’, indicate the pious intention required for good deeds. See [Appendix A](#) for a justification of this translation.

<sup>25</sup> Skjærvø 1983:295, who quotes previous literature.

<sup>26</sup> A discussion of some details of this interpretation is in the [Appendix](#).

<sup>27</sup> This is a point rightly made by Skjærvø 1983:291 f.

possibility is to be firmly rejected; some aspects of the universal eschatological complex are definitely attested from the very earliest period of the Zoroastrian scriptures, and all major eschatological themes show signs of considerable antiquity in Iran.

Should we conclude from this that the notions of universal eschatology, including the yearning for the coming of the Saoshyant, confidence in the resurrection of the dead, the expectation of a just judgement to be meted out to the whole of humanity, although they were part of the ancient heritage of Zoroastrianism, constituted during the Sasanian period a dormant part of the faith, and were not actively pursued or fervently believed in? This possibility has something to commend itself. The period of a triumphant and powerful Zoroastrian state may be argued to have hardly been the time when messianic expectations would be at their peak, when it would be popularly pursued or officially encouraged. The upholders of the official religion, that is to say, the king and his entourage, including the priests attached to the court, may have been indifferent to those aspects of the eschatological complex that had to do with the end of the world, and belief in them may have been at the time suspended, being characteristic perhaps of restricted pious circles.

While it is impossible to decide with any certainty between these possibilities, one may adopt as a working hypothesis that during the early Sasanian period faith in the universal aspects of eschatology was merely present in the background, rather than conspicuously preached. The themes of universal eschatology may have come to prominence again only towards the end of the Sasanian or in the early Islamic period.

One detail of universal eschatology seems nevertheless to have been current even in court circles, and that is the idea that there is a fixed time limit to the existence of a dynasty or kingdom. A dynasty was to exist for three hundred years; the religion would live for a thousand years, at the end of which both religion and dynasty would come to their end, together with the whole world. We have evidence for this from various sources. Mas'ūdī mentions this double limitation as explaining the great chronological 'fraud' of the Sasanians with regard to the duration of the Arsacid dynasty,<sup>28</sup> a fraud that was based on the

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<sup>28</sup> Mas'ūdī *Tanbīh*, 98.

assumption that Zoroaster lived some 300 years before Alexander,<sup>29</sup> and that would have meant that the forecast duration of the Sasanian dynasty would be too short.

A similar notion about the duration of the life of a 'family' (that is to say: a dynasty) is contained in the short Pahlavi treatise known as the *Memorial of Wuzurgmihr*, although the number is different. There we read:

As all things of this world are transience, decay and impermanence, even he for whom the world is wide open, and to whom fortune gives a hand,...within the span of a hundred years the body reaches its end and power comes to nothing; within the span of four hundred years<sup>30</sup> the family reaches disintegration, fame comes to oblivion and falls out of memory, a household comes to desolation and pollution, family and kinship fall into degeneration and ruin, effort turns into fruitlessness, toil and labour fall into void, sovereignty falls into the hands of the lords of the world. [...] The things of the Renovation [however] are lasting and do not decay. Only righteousness, the creation of the Renovation and the doing of good deeds cannot be taken away by any one.<sup>31</sup>

As may be seen from this passage, the idea of a limited span of time for the life of a dynasty is based on a larger wisdom-literature observation that the life-span of an individual is at the most one hundred years, while that of a family is four hundred years. The figure 'four hundred'

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<sup>29</sup> A discussion of this point is in Gnoli 1985:37. A new and quite convincing explanation for this traditional date of Zoroaster is in Kingsley 1990. Another discussion of the **Mas'ūdī** passage, from a different point of view, is in Shabbazi 1990:219 f.

<sup>30</sup> The Arabic version has 'three hundred years'.

<sup>31</sup> *PhIT* 85 f. The translation is excerpted from Shaked (forthcoming, b). A similar conception of the inevitable decay of a family, although the number of years is not specified, is in the *Letter of Tansar*, cf. Minovi 1932:19; Boyce 1968:44. In the *Testament of Ardashir* the author, purportedly the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, tactfully refrains from talking of the dissolution of the dynasty within three (or four) hundred years, and speaks only of the general destruction at the end of a thousand years; see 'Abbās 1967:83. In Shahrastānī the figure '350 years' occurs in a similar context (see Shaked [forthcoming, a], §39).

years has as variant 'three hundred'; this variation, if it is not caused by a scribal error, is easy to explain as the result of deducting the one hundred years of the life of the individual from the topical number 400.<sup>32</sup> The idea that occurs in Mas'ūdī's account does not necessarily reflect a specific prediction that related to the length of the Sasanian dynasty, but a mere application of this general wisdom saying. Whether it ever played a part in the reconstruction of the ancient chronology by the Sasanians is a matter for doubt. In any case, the only point that might be relevant to the chronological fraud allegedly perpetrated by the Sasanians was the prediction of the end of the world, not that of the dynasty, because no manipulation of Arsacid data would have made a change to the length of rule of the Sasanian dynasty if that is considered to be predetermined. The same topical number '400' (with a variant '300') years occurs also elsewhere, as for the number of years after which the eschatological *malkōšān* rain will come,<sup>33</sup> or the length of time for which a contract is binding on the descendants of those who draw an agreement.<sup>34</sup>

As to punishment after death, there is an important difference between two basic attitudes that come into expression in the Zoroastrian books. According to one, the wicked will be damned for eternity<sup>35</sup> or will be utterly destroyed. According to the other, the wicked will be purified of their sins, and thus, having become clean, they will partake of the joys of the end of the world with the righteous.<sup>36</sup> The former, according to Boyce, represents the genuine original thought of Zoroaster.<sup>37</sup> I find it personally difficult to decide whether any of them is original. All we can tell from the material at our disposal, which is of rather late date, is that two conflicting doctrines are represented side by side, without seemingly causing undue tension within the community. For our present purpose it is sufficient to note that there is no unified tradition concerning certain central tenets of the faith.

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<sup>32</sup> In ancient Jewish writings 'thirty' and 'forty' serve a similar purpose for denoting the length of a generation.

<sup>33</sup> *PRiv* 48:10.

<sup>34</sup> *PRiv* 12:1 ff., where the number given is '300'. More binding forms of contract may be in force longer, up to a thousand years. See further material in Williams 1990, II:145.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. *PRiv* 36:4.

<sup>36</sup> *PRiv* 48:70.

<sup>37</sup> Boyce 1975:244.

One of the remarkable expressions in Zoroastrian eschatological texts is the statement that the soul is filled with joy at the sight of the body being torn apart after death. The wicked, in contrast, grieves at that sight.<sup>38</sup> This is an example of the process of edificatory exegesis of the religious realities: the experience of the Zoroastrian mode of disposal of the dead, with the body torn apart and scattered, requires an explanation. The tradition we have here achieves the double aim of turning the seemingly revolting sight into a source of joy, using it at the same time for driving home the distinction between good and evil. The joy of the righteous derives from the knowledge of what comes afterwards, and the affliction of the wicked is similarly a reflection of the torture that is to follow. Nevertheless, a certain problem does exist. It seems at the outset somewhat incongruous that faith in the bodily resurrection of mankind at the end of time would go well with the Zoroastrian mode of disposal of the body. Not only do they neglect to preserve it in one place, as by burial, but they actually encourage it to be dismembered and scattered to all corners by birds of prey. We are talking of course of the symbolic value of the disposal of the body.<sup>39</sup> It may make little

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<sup>38</sup> *Dd* purs. 15 (West 1882:36).

<sup>39</sup> The constant expression is that it is torn apart 'by dogs and birds' (*sag ud way*, as in *Dd* pur. 15; similarly in *Zs* 4:25 f.; 30:32; 34:3; *MX* 1:113, *PRiv* 24:2, and other places. This is in continuation of expressions in the *Vendidad*, e.g. *Vd* 8:10. Kammenhuber 1958:302 f. seems to take the references to dogs for the most part as a literary topos). A bird of prey is substituted for a dog as eater of the human flesh in the story of the first human couple. The first preparation of meat is accompanied by giving a portion to the fire, and then giving a portion to the gods. Here the text says:

*ud az hān ī did pārag-ē ō asmān wist u-š guft ku ēn bahr ī yazdān.  
murw ī karkās abar raft ud az awēšān be burd, ceōn nazdist gōšt  
sagān xward* (*GBd* 104; Anklesaria 1956:130 f.).

From the other (portion of meat) he cast a section towards the sky, and said: 'this is the share of the gods'. A vulture came upon it and carried it away from them, as at the beginning the meat was eaten by dogs.

We are told in a Syriac text that the Magi wanted to throw Mar Aba's corpse to the dogs, which aroused the great fury of the Christians and was prevented (Bedjan 1895:270). This could be a Christian figurative expression, but in view of the constant usage in Zoroastrian books,

practical difference whether the flesh decomposes in the earth or whether it disintegrates by vultures, but it seems unlikely that a faith that had the idea of the body rising up alive again would not attempt to preserve it at least in one place and would instead deliberately encourage its dispersal. The discrepancy seems to me significant enough to suggest the existence of two different traditions that have coalesced here.<sup>40</sup> It used to be assumed by scholars that the exposure of the body

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it seems that this was an expression that was commonly used in Zoroastrian parlance as well. Another Christian testimony for dogs and birds eating the corpse is in Cameron 1969/70:79. A Chinese testimony of the sixth century C.E. referring to Sogdiana describes the custom of the disposing of corpses in the following terms:

Il y a au dehors de la ville royale deux cents familles de gens qui se consacrent particulièrement au soin des funérailles. Ils bâtissent des pavillons dans lesquelles ils nourrissent des chiens. Quand un homme meurt, ils vont chercher son cadavre, le déposant dans un de ces pavillons et le font dévorer par leurs chiens; lorsqu'il n'y a plus de chair ils recueillent les os et les enterrent, mais sans les mettre dans une bière (Rémusat 1829:230, cf. Tomaschek 1877:71).

A reminiscence of the substitution of dogs by birds seems to survive in the funerary custom of *sag-dīd*, according to which it is necessary to expose the body of a newly deceased person to the gaze of a dog, apparently as a precursor to its flesh being eaten by birds. This is hinted at by the saying that occurs in *PersRiv*, I:111 (tr. Dhabhar, p. 113), according to which the dog's gaze (*sag-dīd*) is parallel to the shadow of the birds. The explanations encountered in the literature for this custom, namely that the dog wards off demons, or that the dog is an expert in establishing death (the latter a rationalistic explanation perhaps invented by *Jāhīz*), may be secondary. Grenet 1984:228 mentions possible archaeological evidence for the cleaning of bones by dogs.

<sup>40</sup> Böklen 1902:102 points out that the extraordinary care the Magi took to destroy the corpse is in itself a presumption against their having originally cherished any hope of a resurrection. This is quoted by Moulton 1913:253.



was originally a Magian, as opposed to Zoroastrian, custom. Such a historical reconstruction can be deduced from Herodotus.<sup>41</sup> Whether this is correct, it is not easy to tell, but it is significant that the exposure of bodies was by no means universally observed in Zoroastrian history.

The officially sanctioned Zoroastrian mode for the disposal of the dead was not scrupulously followed in the Sasanian period. As in so many other fields, we lack sufficient material, but the scanty evidence available seems to show cases of burial, as well as of secondary burial of the bones in an ossuary, which does go along with the Zoroastrian prescriptions. As the total archaeological material is not plentiful, it is even more significant that in the cases where the mode of body disposal can be examined, it is not always done in complete conformity with the prescription of the Zoroastrian texts.<sup>42</sup>

We have an ambiguous allusion in the Babylonian Talmud to a conflict occurring between Jews and Zoroastrians in the Sasanian period over the question of the disposal of the dead, where the Jewish practice

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<sup>41</sup> Herodotus i:140, with comments in Moulton 1913:398; Asheri 1988:346 f. The problem of Achaemenian practices in connection with the disposal of the dead, and the question whether the Achaemenians were Zoroastrian, have been discussed by several scholars. Compare Nyberg 1938:335 ff.; and Kellens 1983b:115, who assumes that the exposure of bodies is a late trait in Zoroastrianism. There was certainly more than one practice in vogue in the Achaemenian period, as I have tried to show (Shaked 1991).

<sup>42</sup> The Middle Persian inscription of Eqlid apparently demonstrates burial; cf. Shaked 1975:224 f. Cf. also Nicholson 1985; Grenet 1990; Russell 1990a. Further evidence for the practice of burial in the Parthian and Sasanian periods is adduced by Boyce and Grenet 1991:66, n. 72. Professor Boyce's assumption that this practice was adopted in Iran under Greek influence may be open to doubt. The ancient Iranians may well have had several different modes for the disposal of the body, one of which was eventually adopted as the official Zoroastrian practice, while the others continued in use without religious sanction. For the evidence of secondary burial in ossuaries cf. Modi 1911b. Several containers for corpses, dating apparently from the Parthian period, were discovered in Warka, cf. Loftus 1857:201 ff. The cemetery of Tok Kala, with Khwarezmian inscriptions indicating the names of the persons whose bones were placed in the ossuaries (*tnbryk*, *tpnkwk* in Khwarezmian), testify to a similar custom under a Zoroastrian umbrella; cf. Tolstov and Livshitz 1964, with the remarks of Henning 1965b. For further discussion of the problems of burial cf. Inostrantsev 1909; 1917:6 ff. The whole material relating to funerary customs in pre-Islamic Central Asia has been thoroughly investigated by Grenet 1984, who emphasizes the overall conformity of the material with the demands of the Zoroastrian scriptures.

of burial is perhaps mentioned as offensive to the Persians.<sup>43</sup> This is a unique and not unambiguous example. We hear very little concerning arguments over this point with the Christians in the fairly rich Christian literature of Sasanian Iran, and this relative silence may be significant. There is however one important piece of information on this subject. In the peace accord between Emperor Justinian and Khusrau in 545 CE, a special clause is reported to have granted the Christians permission to bury their dead in the Persian kingdom, according to Menander.<sup>44</sup> In one interesting instance we are told of the Catholicos Mar Aba, who died in 552 CE, that the day of his death fell within the period of Frawardīgān, which is consecrated to the souls of the righteous dead. On these days, the Christian chronicle says, only the righteous and the most excellent people (*al-akhyār wa-l-afāḍil*) die.<sup>45</sup> When the king got to know of the death of Mar Aba, he made everything possible that the dead man be buried with full honour.<sup>46</sup> Far from inhibiting burial, the king is reported to encourage it in the case of this excellent man. A book that is so knowledgeable about the Sasanian period would surely not commit a silly blunder if the question of burial had been a prominent matter of dispute. More evidence is however necessary.

It may be concluded tentatively that the common practice of the Sasanian period was not necessarily that enjoined by the *Vendidad*, and that there was little effort made to impose it. A similar diversity may well have existed in the Achaemenian period as well.<sup>47</sup> It is clearly wrong to identify the Zoroastrian religion exclusively with the views that reached us though the channel of the official Zoroastrian scriptures, and it may be bad method to try and harmonize the archaeological and historical data with the legal prescriptions.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The Talmudic text Bab. Yebamot 63b is somewhat obscure and is open to more than one interpretation. See Beer 1982; Brody 1990:58.

<sup>44</sup> See Guillaumont 1969/70:49.

<sup>45</sup> This is no doubt an echo of the Pahlavi expression *wehān* on which see further below.

<sup>46</sup> *Patr. Or.* 7:169 f. The same composition, 7:197, speaks of burial (using the Arabic root **dfn**) with regard to Khusrau Anōshag-ruwān.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Shaked 1991. Kellens 1983:115 makes a similar argument against Nyberg, saying that it would be anachronistic to expect the prescriptions of the *Vendidad* to be observed in the Achaemenid period. Even in the Sasanian period, as we see, it is not certain that burial was considered to be un-Zoroastrian.

<sup>48</sup> As is done by Boyce with regard to the Achaemenians in her *History of Zoroastrianism* (Boyce 1975a). See also Edsman 1969.

Resurrection seems to be a subject around which some implicit controversy reigns in the Pahlavi works. One question raised is, what would be the age of the people when they are brought to life? We hear, on the one hand, that they will all rise either at the ideal age of maturity, forty, or at the ideal age of puberty, fifteen, depending on their age-status at death.<sup>49</sup> But then, in other texts, the topic seems to serve for expressing a point of controversy:

Men will be deathless and ageless if they have no need for food.  
If they have eaten meat, they will be resurrected at the age of  
forty; and if they have not eaten meat, they will be resurrected at  
the age of fifteen.<sup>50</sup>

We seem to have here a gradation of humanity at the time of the Resurrection into three classes, according to three modes of behaviour with regard to food. The text is not entirely clear. We know from other texts that in the days before the end of the world people will progressively give up food: at first they will be in no need of meat, then they will be doing away with milk, finally they will have no desire for bread, subsisting on water alone.<sup>51</sup> From the passage we have just quoted, if it refers to the same topic, it seems that some will continue to be dependent on food and even on meat in the eschatological period before the Renovation. Such nourishment is probably considered a mark of great attachment to *gētīg*, and consequently implies that those people are unsuitable for the purity of *mēnōg*.<sup>52</sup> We thus have three grades: those who did not desist from eating meat will be resurrected at the ripe age of forty, which marks the completion of the mature life cycle; those who did, will be resurrected at the age of fifteen, an age of prime youth; and finally those who had no food at all will be resurrected at no age at all. Another possible interpretation of this text is by assuming that it refers not to the eschatological era, but to the eating habits of people in

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<sup>49</sup> *GBd* 226:6–9; Anklesaria 1956:290 f. (XXXIV:24).

<sup>50</sup> *PhlT* 107 (= *MahFr* §40–41). See Molé 1963:99 f.; Williams 1990, II:234 (where a different translation is given).

<sup>51</sup> *GBd* 221:1–5; Anklesaria 1956:282 f. (XXXIV:1).

<sup>52</sup> Meat was the food that the first human couple ate latest. When they ate it for the first time, it was regarded as a sin on their part. See *GBd* 103:8 ff.; Anklesaria 1956:130 f. (XIV:21).

the present world, with a clear advocacy for vegetarianism.<sup>53</sup>

In another text we have an implicit controversy against this position:

There will once again be enjoyment of all the food and all the things from which (there is) pleasure and comfort and enjoyment for mankind...There will be a thousand times as many foods and tastes as there are now. He who believes in this will eat, and he who does not believe in this will not eat.<sup>54</sup>

The final phrase contains a polemical note that we are luckily in a position to identify by contrasting it with the other texts already quoted. No need to have an ascetic diet (either now, as seems to be the sense of the text; or towards the end of the world, according to another possible alternative), for in the world to come all tastes will be available to all. The distinction, for the author of the last text quoted, is not whether one eats or not, but whether one believes or not. The note of polemic here is clear, even though the subject matter of the controversy is opaque: is it a debate over asceticism in this world, or over the question whether there should be gradual desisting from food towards the end? I tend to believe that the first interpretation is correct.

The second point which should be tackled is that of vision as the key to discovering the reality of the hidden things, including those that belong to the world to come.

One way of communicating with the gods and of obtaining direct knowledge of the things of the next world, a way of verifying the truths of religion, was vision, as we have seen done by Kirdēr. This was certainly not a way open to all. It was confined to a select group of people, who would have regarded themselves as representing the others, and who would then reveal to the rest of the community what they had been privileged to witness. Even with those people this was not a trivial experience that could be undergone casually or that could be repeated easily. These were rare occasions, which were deemed to be surrounded by grave risks. We can only guess that the danger lay in the very fact that this was the path trodden by the dead, and that by association the person undertaking it was virtually dead, at least for the period of the

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<sup>53</sup> According to this interpretation, the first phrase would constitute a general statement, without referring to a specific category.

<sup>54</sup> *Priv* 48:58–60. Williams's translation of the last phrase is somewhat different.

journey. The journey may have also been considered to be particularly frightening because certain encounters along the way may have put one's power of endurance to a difficult test. In some cases the preparation for this journey was done by administering to the officiant a dose of *mang*, or *mang* mixed with wine. He would then be transported to the other world, being temporarily dead to this world; when he came back his arrival would be celebrated with a great show of joy and relief. Several of these elements show strong similarity with the complex of practices associated with shamanistic cults, on which we shall have to say a little more further on.

We can only speculate about the presumed effect of the narcotic taken. It was perhaps considered to be able to open consciousness of a special kind, and thus may have acted as a stimulant; at the same time it could also be operating in the opposite direction, namely, to soften or obliterate fear and pain, acting as a sedative. This last point emerges from the fact that it was administered to Gayōmard as a pain killer when he was about to die.<sup>55</sup> This is the known double effect of several narcotic drugs. The visionary who went on a journey to the next world needed both the hallucinogenic quality of the drug, to stimulate his vision, and its effect of alleviating fear and pain.

It seems that in the Sasanian period it was customary to quote famous examples of great figures of the past who had used *mang* and had seen visions of the hereafter. We have the fictional account of Ardā Wirāz, who was chosen by his contemporaries to go to the other world and bring them information on how it looked like over there. We also have the legend of Wishtāsp, the sovereign under whose patronage Zoroaster was able to operate, who converted to the new religion announced by Zoroaster when the divine entity Asha, at the command of Ohrmazd, administered to him the intoxicating potion and made him see the visions of the hereafter.<sup>56</sup> That was the conclusive proof he needed. He served as a supreme paradigm for the authors of religious literature in the Sasanian period. Zoroaster himself had been one of the models for

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<sup>55</sup> *GBd* 43:11 ff.; Anklesaria 1956:50 f. (IV:20).

<sup>56</sup> *Dk* VII, 4:84–86 (Molé 1967:58 ff.); *PRiv* 47:15–19, cf. Williams 1990, 11:224 f. Widengren 1983:103 f. gives to my mind an unsatisfactory transcription and translation of the *PRiv* passage. On Wishtāsp as a medium see the discussion in Hultgård 1983:400 ff.

this attainment of vision, coupled in his case with the wisdom of omniscience.<sup>57</sup>

It is striking that Pahlavi literature of the late Sasanian and early Muslim period is practically obsessed with descriptions of visions of the hereafter. The classical monument in this genre is of course the Book of Ardā Wirāz, but it is not unique. The opening chapter of the book of the Spirit of Wisdom (*Mēnōg ī Xrad*) has an almost sensual description of the figure of Wisdom. Besides, visions of the Amahraspands are alluded to quite frequently in the Pahlavi books, together with discussions of the possibility of seeing *mēnōg*, or of the organ which is set aside for this kind of vision, 'the eye of the soul'.<sup>58</sup>

Vision of *mēnōg* comes up again and again in Pahlavi literature. The theme seems to have been alive throughout the whole of the Sasanian period. It occurs as a central theme in the text which describes the history of the Zoroastrian faith, where words ascribed to Khusrau are quoted. The test and proof of a religious experience for him is the ability to see *mēnōg*. This is the supreme religious achievement. The idea of eschatology is absent from that account.<sup>59</sup> In the post-Sasanian period the idea of the vision of the spiritual things seems to have subsided.

It may be noted that the passage to the other world entails the possibility of the soul being capable of seeing Ohrmazd and the Amesha Spentas. Thus we read:

People should learn and listen to that which (comes) from the Avesta and Zand and from that which they see with their eyes and hear with their ears. For from learning, there comes to them knowledge; and from listening, there comes to them meekness and gentleness; from knowledge and gentleness he becomes worthy of coming to the Best Existence and Garodman, and to the vision of Ohrmazd and of the Amesha Spenta.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The texts are quoted by Hultgård 1983:402 ff.

<sup>58</sup> *cašm ī jān*, and similar expressions. For a discussion of this concept see Gnoli 1979:414; 1984a:215 f., where further references are given. This question comes up several times in the works of Widengren (see in particular Widengren 1955, 11:68; 1965:70; 1983:103 f.).

<sup>59</sup> The text and some further discussion is in Lecture 5.

<sup>60</sup> *mardomān hān ī az abestāg ud zand ud hān ī pad cašm wēnēnd ud pad gōš ašnawēnd a-šan āmōxtišn ud niyōšišn abāyēd* <*kardan*>

This is a notion of vision which is promised to mankind in eschatology. In another text a promise of such a vision is made with regard to the whole creation, perhaps even within their life in this world.<sup>61</sup>

The souls of the righteous dead enjoy the knowledge of the secrets denied to their kinsmen on earth:

The righteous undergo pain when they depart from *gētīg*. After they depart [from *gētīg*] until they have gone through that frightful Reckoning, they lament.<sup>62</sup> After the Reckoning they have joy at their station, and also at the fact that their kinsmen<sup>63</sup> who are in the material world, who have not obtained the secret of the spirits and are not aware of their station, are worried (about them) in a *gētīg* manner...<sup>64</sup>

An even clearer description of the human occupation in the eschatological period is given in another Pahlavi text:

Their work will be this, to behold Ohrmazd, to bow [or:pray] to him and to the lords, and to do the other things which seem to themselves most pleasing.<sup>65</sup>

The notion of the ‘eye of the soul’ is connected to the area of the contact between the Visible’, or *gētīg*, aspect of the world, and the ‘invisible’, or *mēnōg*. A question that comes up from time to time in the Pahlavi texts is whether it is possible to witness *mēnōg* with the power

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*ce-šān az āmōxtišn dānāgīh u-šān az niyōšišn nihādagīh ud carbīh bawēd ud az dānāgīh ud carbīh be ō wahišt ud garōdmān ud wēnišn ī ohrmazd ud amahraspandān madan arzānīgīh bawēd (PRiv 36:14).*

<sup>61</sup> *ud hamāg spenāg mēnōg dām ī gētīg* <sup>+</sup>*wēnišn arz (PRiv 18h:1)*, ‘the value is the vision by the whole material creation of the sacred spirit’. *hamāg* seems to be misplaced. For <sup>+</sup>*wēnišn* Williams reads *estišn* ‘existence’, which strikes me as unlikely.

<sup>62</sup> Read: *tā be widaštan ī-š pad hān* <*i*> *škišt āmār cēhīdār*.

<sup>63</sup> Read: *hamnāfān*.

<sup>64</sup> *Dd pur.* 21:2; compare Shaked 1969:207 f. (which should be corrected as indicated here).

<sup>65</sup> *PRiv* 48:102.

of vision, as if it were a body. This question may strike us as a contradiction in terms, for *mēnōg* is defined as that which is invisible, but this is not the attitude of the Zoroastrian thinkers.

It should be noted that there are several different acceptations of the term 'the eye of the soul'. It is often used, especially in theological texts, to denote the intellectual grasp, and is equivalent to our usage of a term such as 'perception', or 'insight', two words etymologically related to the field of vision, but with specialized intellectual sense. Thus, in a systematic discussion of the problem of knowledge and ignorance we have the following definitions:

The substance of knowledge is that whose definition by itself is: 'that which opens the eye of the soul to the vision of things visible by the soul', just like the substance of light, whose definition is: 'that which opens the eye of the body to the vision of the things visible by the body'.<sup>66</sup>

The parallel negative definition is given in the same chapter:

The definition of the substance of ignorance is: it is itself the one that blocks the eye of the soul from seeing the things that are visible to the soul, just as the substance of darkness is defined as that which itself blocks the eye of the body from seeing that which is visible to the body.<sup>67</sup>

The soul, in symmetry with the body, sees things by the 'eye of the soul'. We need attribute to this term nothing more elaborate or profound than the idea that the soul perceives spiritual things, and that the organ that serves for this perception is called metaphorically its 'eye'.

We have an early echo of this ability to see *mēnōg* entities in a report by Diogenes Laertius, apparently on the authority of Sotio (2nd century B.C.),<sup>68</sup> where it is said that the air is full of images which are visible to

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<sup>66</sup> *Dk* III 400:1. The reference is to a division of chapters into sections in a planned edition and translation of *Denkard* III.

<sup>67</sup> *Dk* III 400:8.

<sup>68</sup> *Prooem.* 6–9. Cf. Windischmann 1863:286 ff., where the interpretation of these visions as referring to the *fravašis* is perhaps too narrow. Cf. also Clemen 1920:75. The text is quoted in Bidez and Cumont 1938, II:67; discussion *op. cit.*, I:75 ff.



those who are sharp-sighted. The report is credible, as it conforms to what we can read in the Pahlavi sources; it refers to the possibility of seeing those entities, but contains a clause that restricts this vision to people with special powers.

There is also a mythical usage of the term ‘the eye of the soul’. Zoroaster asks to see the soul of Karsāsp with this organ.<sup>69</sup> Neryōsang was sent by Ohrmazd to Wishtāsp. The latter received from Neryōsang divine food that caused the eye of his soul to see the divine splendour<sup>70</sup> and the mysteries.<sup>71</sup>

Much has been written recently about the shamanistic character of the visions of Kirdēr and of Ardā Wirāz.<sup>72</sup> It must, however, be remarked that they reflect a very restricted kind of vision, describing as they do the journey of the soul to the other world. They quite clearly smack of literary conventions, even in the case of Kirdēr, where the device of a supernatural vision is used by a historical personality writing in the first person. The affinity of this vision with shamanism is undeniable, but does it still fall within the definition of shamanistic phenomena? The argument over this question tends to be circular, and is ultimately a

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. *PRiv* 18f.1f.; Williams 1990, II:39.

<sup>70</sup> *xwarrah*.

<sup>71</sup> *rāz*, *Dk* VII, 4:84. Widengren 1979:347 ff. accepts the interpretation given in Molé 1967. I would rather suggest that the passage be read and translated as follows:

*frēstīd andar ham zamān dādār ohrmazd neryōsang yazad ō mān  
ī wištāsp pad aštagīh ī ašawahišt amahraspand xwārēnīdan ī ō  
wištāsp hān jān cašm pad abar-wēnišnīh ī ō mēnōgān axwān  
rōšngar xwarišn ke rāy a-š dād wištāsp wuzurg xwarr ud rāz.*

The Creator Ohrmazd sent at the same time the god Neryōsang to the house of Wishtasp with a message addressed to the Amahraspand Ašawahišt (namely), to make Wishtasp eat, (that is to say, to feed) the eye of (his) soul the luminous food, which is (capable of causing him) to see the existence of the spiritual beings. This is how he, Wishtasp, saw the great splendour and mystery.

An earlier translation is in Shaked 1969:210.

<sup>72</sup> Gignoux 1979; 1987; 1990; 1991:76 f., and elsewhere. See also Russell 1990b, Colpe 1967.

quibbling over terminology. Given the rarity of the phenomenon in Sasanian Iran, and the high probability that it is used as a literary topos rather than to describe a common religious practice, it seems to me that it would be exaggerated to claim Sasanian Zoroastrianism as an example of a shamanistic religion. The most we can say is that we may have here a literary survival or a reminiscence of a theme which may have been current in an older period in one of the sources of the Zoroastrian tradition. It must be stressed, however, that no direct evidence for such an older shamanistic stratum is available. Nyberg's attempt to reconstruct this type of religion for Zoroaster<sup>73</sup> has not convinced most scholars. Henning may have been too harsh in his criticism when he scornfully dubbed Nyberg's Zoroaster 'a witch-doctor',<sup>74</sup> but the Gathas, or whatever can be understood of them with any clarity, provide no proof for Nyberg's contention.

The Zoroastrians were not the only practitioners in Late Antiquity of this technique of visions of the hereafter. We have accounts of visions seen by Jews,<sup>75</sup> Christians,<sup>76</sup> and Romans.<sup>77</sup> The human potential for verifying the truths of the supernatural world through visions was firmly accepted, and from time to time people had recourse to it. It is hardly necessary to point out that neither Judaism nor Christianity can be called shamanistic for utilizing this kind of evidence from the hereafter.

It is possible to conclude from the texts we have quoted that there are two complementary notions of the 'eye of the soul'. One is mythological, and may be an ancient heritage in Iran; the other is theological, and seems to be the result of learned speculation which sought to include

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<sup>73</sup> Nyberg 1938.

<sup>74</sup> Henning 1951.

<sup>75</sup> Accounts of such transportations and journeys are given in the apocryphal literature. This is also largely the subject-matter of the *Hekhalot* literature, which tells of the journey of the mystic to the upper worlds. A discussion of some of the material is in Niditch 1980. A brief comparison of the Jewish and Iranian visions is made by Hultgård 1982a.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Bedjan 1891:6–8, where the vision of Mihr-Narse, a Persian Christian, is given; Hoffmann 1880:11 gives just a short summary of the text. On the vision of St. Gregory in comparison to Iranian themes, see Hultgård 1982b. Alexander 1983:239 discussed the shamanistic analogy.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. the account of the vision of Julius Canus, at the time of the emperor Caligula, quoted in MacMullen 1975:96. For discussions of the question of the ascension of the soul in Iran from a comparative perspective, cf. Bousset 1901; Colpe 1967.

this idea in the framework of a theory of knowledge. The crucial point here is that this is the organ that enables one to see things of the beyond, that are invisible in ordinary experience. The world of *mēnōg*, defined as invisible, is inaccessible to regular vision. In special circumstances, of which the mythology gives us several instances, this world has a shape and a form that are perceived by the 'eye of the soul'. Access to vision of *mēnōg* is never a commonplace experience, and seems to be confined, even for the privileged few who have been granted this faculty, to special, out-of-the-ordinary, situations. The journeys to the hereafter, undertaken by some individuals in the Sasanian period, are an instance of this human capacity. They are embarked upon in order to probe, at the mystic's own initiative and at some risk, the secrets hidden from the eyes of humanity. This is done either by viewing that which lies beyond—the world of the dead, or by inspecting that which will come after—the world of universal eschatology. The first type of vision is typical of Kirdēr and Ardā Wirāz, the second characterizes the apocalyptic seers. Much of this complex of notions is shared by Iran with other confessional groups of the Hellenistic and Byzantine world, and it seems impossible to assign priority to any of those. It is, however, typical of the peculiar Iranian heritage that deified abstract notions can assume shapes and forms and become concrete in a given situation (as happens with *xwarrah*), without ever losing their abstract character. This is the quality that causes Iranian religious tradition always to hover on the borderline between the visible and the invisible.

### III

## Man and the Divine

THE IRANIAN conception of man underwent several currents of influence from different cultures, during which ideas borrowed from other civilizations were taken up and absorbed. The theory of man in the Sasanian period was without doubt shaped by this combination of local tradition and the impact of surrounding cultures. The picture may be even more complex than that. One should take into account, for example, not only diachronic change, but also diversity within the Iranian field itself. The Avestan heritage is rich in conception and terminology, although the meaning of many of the terms used in the Avesta is opaque. The Middle Persian tradition is strongly influenced by this heritage, but seems to reflect primarily a different strain of Iranian anthropological conceptions, with a somewhat different division of human powers. The main elements of foreign influence that should be taken into account are the Greek (largely Aristotelian) and Indian heritage, with possibly some presence of Jewish and Christian ideas.<sup>1</sup>

Let us begin by describing the classical conception of man according to the Pahlavi books—a fairly complicated subject, but one that is well worth going into. In this field it may be assumed that Pahlavi literature reflects quite closely the ideas current in the Sasanian period. The picture obtained differs so thoroughly from that current among Islamic thinkers, that it may be assumed that there was practically no Islamic impact on Zoroastrian writings of the period. It is also different from the views of Jewish and Christian writers of Late Antiquity. The chances therefore are that we have to do with a typically Zoroastrian set of ideas, which developed in Iran during the Sasanian period, with no more

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<sup>1</sup> For discussions of Zoroastrian religious anthropology see Bailey 1943:78 ff.; Menasce 1945:75 f.; Duchesne-Guillemin 1955; Widengren 1955:16 ff.; Shaked 1974; Gignoux 1989.

than fleeting contacts with other schools of thought. Since, however, we have come to understand that the Pahlavi books are not always a complete mirror of ideas and tendencies current in the Sasanian period, we may expect to find that there were ideas not fully presented in those books, and that there was divergence of opinion in this field, as in most others.

Man is both an instrument of combat against evil, and a dualistic entity in himself. His dualism, like that of the rest of the world, but perhaps in a sharper manner, comprises the two aspects: the dualism of *mēnōg* and *gētīg*, as well as the dualism of good and evil. Ethical dualism is expressed in the form of the two options, actually the two sets of entities resident within man; the gods and the demons residing within his person, and the inclinations that exist there. The general structure of the person is somewhat 'Zurvanite': there is *ox*, which is to some extent outside the battle, and there is the split into two in all other aspects of the person.<sup>2</sup> The great diversity of human powers and 'souls' is a heritage from an older layer of Zoroastrian literature, which is made to conform to some extent to the overall scheme of the Sasanian perception of man. To some extent only, not totally.

The structural similarity with the myth of Zurvan that has been alluded to should not lead us to think that the conception of the human person expressed in the Pahlavi books is in any sense of the term 'Zurvanite'. There is no reason to suppose that Zurvanism was an organized body of religion, comprising, besides mythology, also theology, ritual, or a church structure. Nothing like this is ever present in any of the texts on which we base our knowledge of the Zurvanite myth.<sup>3</sup>

Another conception of the faculties of Man makes him similar in structure to the *mēnōg* world of the deities, or more precisely to the organization of the divine world. The text in which this is set out in the clearest manner is the *Bundahišn*:

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<sup>2</sup> On the notion of *ox* see in some detail Shaked 1974.

<sup>3</sup> On Zurvanism in greater detail see Lecture 5, and Shaked 1992b.

The soul is like Ohrmazd. Intelligence, memory, sensation, thought, knowledge and distinction are like the six Amesha Spentas, who stand in front of Ohrmazd.<sup>4</sup>

We should not be put off by the fact that this list contains what looks like a mixture of incompatible elements: besides the spiritual powers within man there is also *uzwārišn*, which normally designates 'interpretation'. The discrepancy is, however, more apparent than real, for *uzwārišn* represents here the 'power of making distinctions', which is its literal sense.<sup>5</sup>

It is noteworthy that man is a microcosm not only in the sense that he imitates the whole complex of dualism that is manifest in the world, but he is also, with some inconsistency, a reflection of the divine world surrounding Ohrmazd. Thus Ohrmazd is said in a theological text to keep his 'limbs' within man:

The limbs of the Creator Ohrmazd within the *gētīg* creations are (as follows): through Wahman, who inhabits mind (*ox*); (through) Spandarmad, whose throne is reminiscence (*wārom*); and (through) Srōsh, who is the preserver of thought.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ruwān ceōn ohrmazd ud huš ud wīr ud mālišn ud andōšišn ud dānišn ud uzwārišn ceōn hān šaš amahraspand ī pēš ī ohrmazd ēstēnd* (GB d 190: 13 f.; Anklesaria 1956:244, XXVIII:4). Cf.

Götze 1923:63, who translates what we have transcribed *mālišn* by 'Gedächtnis'. In Bailey 1943:102, n. 4, *mālišn* is connected to *mālīdan*, 'to experience, sense'. The following passage shows its meaning:

*tan ī mardomān az brīnišn <𐬨𐬀> darrēnišn dard aōn mālēd ku ka ruwān ham-kadag ī tan* (Dd pur 15:2).

The body of men experiences such pain from the tearing and splitting as if the soul shares a habitation with the body.

<sup>5</sup> See Polotsky 1932.

<sup>6</sup> *hannām ī dādār-ohrmazd andar gētīg-dahišnān pad wahman mehmān <ī> ox ud spandarmad <ī> wārom gāh ud srōš dāštār <ī> menišn* (Dk III 60:9; DkM 49:15–17; DkB 36:14–15; Menasce 1973:67). See also Dd pur 2:17.

The relationship between man and Ohrmazd functions in both directions, as we can see from the following text:

He (=Ohrmazd) placed the wisdom of omniscience on Zoroaster's hand in the shape of water, and said: 'Drink!' Zoroaster drank of it, and he mingled the wisdom of omniscience within Zoroaster. Zoroaster was for seven days and nights within the wisdom of Ohrmazd.<sup>7</sup>

Here the supreme man, Zoroaster, can absorb the wisdom of Ohrmazd and exist within it, although in this mythological context this is possible only for a limited period of time.

The divine presence within man is paralleled by a demonic presence. Although this balance is required by the dualistic principle, the demon's occupation of the human person and of its powers is not entirely on a par with that of the gods. Thus, the formidable demon Xeshm gets the following advice from his chief, Ahreman:

If you wish, you will know the trick for these two things. Go yourself to the *mēzd* ceremony, and sit in their *wārom* until they chatter. The *yazad* will (then) go away from their presence.<sup>8</sup>

The passage continues with a similar advice for spoiling the *gāhām bār*, but warns the demon that there is nothing to be done about the greatest virtue, that of *xwēdōdah*, or next-of-kin marriage. This last detail, the unbreakable virtue of *xwēdōdah*, is the point of the whole text. What interests us here is the sneaky way in which the demons are supposed to operate in man. They are not legitimate residents of the human person, but merely intruders, or, as they are sometimes called, 'robbers'.<sup>9</sup>

More than fifty years ago Professor Bailey discussed many of the notions relating to the composition of man in his Ratanbai Katrak lectures, later published under the title *Zoroastrian problems in the*

<sup>7</sup> *u-š xrad ī harwisp-āgāhīh pad āb karb abar dast ī zardušt kard u-š guft ku frāz xwar ud zardušt az-eš frāz xward u-š xrad ī harwisp āgāhīh pad zardušt andar gumēxt. haft rōz-šabān zardušt andar ohrmazd xradīh būd* (ZWY 3:6–8; see Hultgård 1983:402).

<sup>8</sup> *agar tō kāmēh ēn 2 ciš cārag dānēh, ce andar mēzd xwad be ras u-šān pad wārom be nišān tā be drāyēnd yazad az nazdīk ī awēšān be šawēd* (PRiv 56:16).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Dk VI 1a–1b* and the comments on the expression *rāh dārēd* in Shaked 1979:226 f.

*ninth-century books*.<sup>10</sup> There is no point in duplicating the work so well done by him, but it would be in place to make a number of observations on some specific topics. We are mainly interested in the following to explore the relationship between man and the divine.

Besides certain details where traces of Aristotelian thinking, and perhaps also of some other Greek writers,<sup>11</sup> can be detected, there is a solid tradition which derives from the Avesta and which continues the vocabulary of the sacred scripture. In this tradition some elements were added to the accepted Avestan notions, while others were omitted. An example of a speculative piece of writing about these subjects, derived apparently from indigenous materials, is in chapter 218 of *Dēnkard* III, which was partly edited and translated by Bailey.<sup>12</sup> It was subsequently translated again by de Menasce, in his complete translation of the book,<sup>13</sup> but the text could do, I believe, with a fresh examination.<sup>14</sup>

According to that text there are four spiritual entities in man: the soul (*ruwān*), the vital soul, or *anima* (*jān*), the pre-existent soul (*frawahr*), and consciousness (*bōy*). The highest among them is the soul, which controls the others and uses their powers as instruments and weapons in making the person ready for his fight in the battle against the demons and in waging the actual war. Two similes are used for each one of these powers: that of a householder, who takes good care of his house, and that of a horseman, who tends and grooms his horse. This is the manner by which the various spiritual powers in man control him. Above them all is *axw* (or *ox*), which is described as ‘the lord and commander-in-battle of the soul’.<sup>15</sup>

Another scheme consists of five entities, which are: body (*tan*); vital soul (= *anima*, *jān*); soul (*ruwān*), associated with consciousness (*bōy*);<sup>16</sup> form (*ēwēnag*); and pre-existent soul (*frawahr*).<sup>17</sup> In this scheme the

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<sup>10</sup> Bailey 1943:78 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g. Bailey 1943:102, with regard to the three notions *wīr*, *ōš*, *xrad*.

<sup>12</sup> Bailey 1943:98 ff.

<sup>13</sup> J.de Menasce 1973:230 f. seems not to have taken account of Bailey’s translation; this led him to a number of regrettable errors.

<sup>14</sup> See [Appendix E](#), where a new edition and translation of this text is given.

<sup>15</sup> The term has a double meaning, derived from its dual etymological background: (1) ‘existence’; (2) ‘lord, chief’. The discussions in the Pahlavi literature play about with this double meaning; see Shaked 19743.

<sup>16</sup> This latter notion is not considered an independent power in this list.

<sup>17</sup> *GBd* 34:4 ff.; cf. Nyberg 1929:232; Bailey 1943:92.



first two are associated with the body and its life, the last two are *mēnōg* entities that may exist outside the body, while the middle one, the soul, is a spiritual entity that resides and functions within the body. This scheme does not incorporate *ox*, just as the formerly quoted scheme did not include within its powers *ēwēnag* ‘form’, or *tan*, the body. The two structures thus have two different points of departure, and may represent two different schools of speculation about the structure of man.

There is yet another scheme, developed in the *Selections of Zādsparam*<sup>18</sup> According to that text the powers of man are divided into three parts: ‘that which belongs to the body’ (*tanīg*), ‘that which belongs to the *anima* (*jānīg*), and ‘that which belongs to the soul’ (*ruwānīg*). Each one of these divisions contains three powers. The first, the bodily division, consists of (1) ‘bodily’, (2) ‘watery’, and (3) ‘windy’, powers. The second division, that of the *anima*, consists of ‘the *anima*’, ‘consciousness’ (*bōy*) and ‘the pre-existent soul’ (*frawahr*). The third division, relating to the soul, consists equally of three elements, which are ‘the soul inside the body’, ‘the soul outside the body’ and ‘the soul that is the lord over the spiritual entities’ (*ruwān ī pad-mēnōgān axwān*). This is a highly speculative attempt at creating an elaborate scheme using a multiple of three, with nine powers in total. In this case, too, the materials for the construction are largely taken from inside the Zoroastrian tradition. In the first category, that of the bodily powers, an attempt is seen to be made to combine it with the theory of the four elements, but fire is omitted as impossible to accommodate within this framework of three. Fire is not only an important element of human and animal composition, it also forms a discrete part of the second division, that of *jān*.<sup>19</sup>

These schemes, and several others that exist in the Pahlavi texts, show one basic thing that interests us in this connection: that there were several schools of thought about these questions. As far as we can tell, none of them was considered to be more ‘orthodox’ than the others. They were merely alternative modes of thinking within the Zoroastrian religion.

These formulations are expressions of the activity of learned circles, who, in an effort to reach an understanding of the nature of man that would be on the intellectual level of the time, asked questions that had

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<sup>18</sup> Bailey 1943:184 ff. has a detailed treatment of this text.

<sup>19</sup> See Bailey 1943:106 for details.

not been raised earlier within the tradition. The emphasis on the connections between man and the deity was typical of this activity, as we shall see in the following. Parallel to that intellectual activity was the preoccupation with mythology, which may be regarded as an expression of popular piety in the Sasanian period. In both these cases we can witness the existence of a wide range of tolerated possibilities. When Mazdakism, how ever, used a similar religious idiom to create an anthropological expression for its own ideas, the clash that arose stretched the limits of Zoroastrian tolerance beyond endurance, bringing about eventually the elimination of this 'heresy' from Iran. Why this particular movement was regarded as more dangerous to the very structure of religion and society is a question that is worth pursuing.<sup>20</sup>

The Iranian conception of multiple souls, so typical of the Zoroastrian mode of thinking, was borrowed by Mani. He attributed to the Father of Greatness and to Primal Man sets of spiritual constituents,<sup>21</sup> which may be regarded as cosmic projections of the individual person. Manichaeism has its roots in gnosticism,<sup>22</sup> but at the same time it shares certain essential points with the Zoroastrian tradition;<sup>23</sup> it is based on the assumption that there is an identity of substance between the spiritual aspect of man and the spiritual world, represented in Manichaeism by the deities. Here too, the conception is close enough to the Iranian mode of thinking to have aroused a menace of heresy, against which the Zoroastrian establishment was bound to come out with all its force. We have little direct evidence for the clash between Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, apart from the events of the life and death of Mani, and from some pieces of Zoroastrian anti-Manichaean polemics, the best known among which is the rather late polemical composition *Shkand gumānīg wizār*, where a whole chapter is devoted

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<sup>20</sup> On the Mazdakis see further in Lecture 5.

<sup>21</sup> Polotsky 1935:248 f. For Manichaean mental faculties, cf. also Waldschmidt and Lentz 1926:42; 1933:572 f.; Menasce 1945:75 f., where the Zoroastrian conceptions are studied in comparison with other schemes.

<sup>22</sup> On the figure of the Primal Man in gnostic and related thought systems see Bousset 1907:160 ff.

<sup>23</sup> It does not seem useful to debate the question whether Manichaeism is more 'Iranian' than 'gnostic' or the other way round (as done recently by Gnoli 1985: 74 ff.; an opposite conclusion is reached by Reeves 1992:208 f. from the point of view of the Enoch material). While there is a substantial Iranian component in Manichaeism, the gnostic character of Manichaean teaching is essential.

to an attack against the Manichaean religion.<sup>24</sup> There is, however, one piece of circumstantial evidence for the Zoroastrian battle against the Manichaeans. It is the name by which the Manichaeans were most often referred to during the Sasanian and early Islamic period—*zandīg*. This name surely betrays a principal technique of the Manichaean missionary work among Zoroastrians, which must have consisted in using the exegesis of the Avesta, *Zand*, for reading Manichaean ideas into the scriptures. This method of religious persuasion may have been used by other religious groups as well, but the fact that the Manichaeans were so prominently identified as *zandīg*, that is to say twisters of *zand*, suggests that they were particularly skilful in that. The fact that *zand* had to be declared a dangerous and restricted branch of Zoroastrian learning demonstrates the point. Only by limiting access to it could the priestly hierarchy hope to restrict the potential risk of heretics leading naive Zoroastrians to believe that their teachings formed part of legitimate Zoroastrianism (or what they liked to define by such a term).<sup>25</sup>

Zoroastrianism's notion of the relationship between man and the divine was in some ways similar to that of Manichaeism. It has never accepted the identification of the moral dualism, the dualism of good and evil, with the dichotomy between the material and the spiritual aspects of the world, so typical of a gnostic movement like Manichaeism. Yet it shares with Manichaeism the notion that certain aspects of the human person are essentially identical with the divine world, as well as the idea that the aim of human existence is to try and make this identity a reality, in other words, to try and become divine. Although the aim of a gnostic religion and Zoroastrianism are similar, the way to achieve this aim is radically different. This is an aspect of Zoroastrian faith and practice that has so far received only scant notice, but it is essential for understanding Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrian thinking of the Sasanian period, although it recognizes that there is within man a dualism similar to that which exists in the world at large, that the person is a battleground between the powers of good and evil—in this man is a mirror of the world, just as the world

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<sup>24</sup> A treatment of this chapter, as well as of the polemical chapter in the *Dēnkard*, which he considers to be of the fourth century AD, is in Jackson 1932: 174–217.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Shaked 1969:187 ff.

can be viewed as a huge model of the human person<sup>26</sup>—describes the structure of the person as closely similar to that of the deity. These two modes of thinking—of man as a microcosm and of man as a divine entity—are not entirely compatible, and yet they seem to coexist in Iranian thinking. Thus we are told that the working of divine knowledge within man is similar to that of the Creator, and that the other virtues also operate within man as they do with Ohrmazd.<sup>27</sup>

One element of the constitution of man that has particularly close relationship to the deity is ‘form’, *ēwēnag*, which is kept *post mortem* with Ohrmazd, while the other constituents of the person are held by the various spirits in charge of the elements of the material world. Thus we read in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*:

Ohrmazd will seek the bones from the earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants, the soul from the wind. He will mix them with each other, and will give the ‘form’ which he holds himself.<sup>28</sup>

One implication of this is presumably the following. Just as the various constituents of the body go to the elements of which they form part, the ‘form’ of man is in some way derived from Ohrmazd, and that is why it returns to him after the death of the individual, to be kept by Ohrmazd until the day of Resurrection. ‘Form’ plays a double role in this conception: it is both the ideal form of man, and in this sense it is presumably identical with Ohrmazd himself, in his capacity as the prototype of mankind; but it is also the individual identity of a specific man, for otherwise there would be no point in ‘taking’ the form back from Ohrmazd at the time when each person is being reshaped for the raising of the dead.

Ohrmazd serves as the prototype of man in various ways in different contexts. He serves, for example, as the paradigm for the *xwēdōdah*, the

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<sup>26</sup> The idea of the microcosm in Iran has been treated in great detail by Goetze 1923; Reitzenstein, in Reitzenstein and Schaeder 1926:6 ff.; Duchesne-Guillemin 1963; Mansfeld 1971:21 ff. On the possibility of an Iranian origin to this conception see Momigliano 1990:128 f.; M.L. West 1971.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Dk* III, 400:7.

<sup>28</sup> *PRiv* 48:55; *xwad* clearly refers to Ohrmazd. The logic of the sentence is that just as each one of the other components is held with the various other elements of the world, so the *ēwēnag* is kept with Ohrmazd himself. Williams’s translation is somewhat different.

next-of-kin marriage. The great virtue of this union is exemplified and sanctioned by the fact that Ohrmazd has as his spouse Spandarmad, the earth. These two deities, who have a father and daughter relationship with each other, hold each other in love which is described in tender sensual terms:

When Zoroaster sat before Ohrmazd,...Spandarmad sits at his (i.e. Ohrmazd's) side and she put her hand upon (his) neck. Zoroaster asked Ohrmazd, 'Who is this who is sitting at your side, to whom you show so much love, and she also demonstrates her love to you? You, who are Ohrmazd, would not turn your eyes from her, and she does not turn her eyes from you. You, who are Ohrmazd, would not let her go from (your) hand, and she does not let you go from (her) hand'. And Ohrmazd said, 'This is Spandarmad, who is my daughter and the best lady of my house, and the mother of the creations.'<sup>29</sup>

One unexpressed circumstance that makes this scene visually understandable may lie in the fact that Ohrmazd stands in this context for the sky, which is often conceived to be in sexual relationship with the earth.

Men and the gods are in complementary relationship to each other. They were conceived to be in such a relationship since early Indo-Iranian times. Indian *deva* and *martiya*, Iranian *daēva* and *mašya*, designating 'god' and 'man', occur frequently in complementary parallelism; the expression as a whole indicates the totality of entities that belong to the same species. Although the term *daēva* acquired a

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<sup>29</sup> *PRiv* 8a:2–5; cf. Williams 1990, II:10, where a slightly different translation is given. As for the text that comes next, I would suggest the following translation:

'When they say that this is a most wonderful thing, how is it said of you, who are Ohrmazd?' To this Ohrmazd replies: 'This has been the best and (most) <sup>+</sup>sweet thing of men. When I thus created Mashye and Mashyane at the time of the original creation and onwards, I also created you thus. For when people turn away from that thing, it does not turn away from them' (*PRiv* 8a:5–7).

heavy load of pejorative connotation in Zoroastrian usage, reminiscences of this combination are still extant in the Avesta,<sup>30</sup> but not only there; there is evidence for a continued neutral use of the term *dēw* even in Islamic times, probably in direct continuation of a usage that must have been current in the Sasanian period and much earlier.<sup>31</sup>

This last point shows that despite the revision of terms effected by the Zoroastrian religion, through which *daēva* was transformed to mean a negative entity, the ancient usage which regarded it as a general, and rather harmless, term for superhuman and supernatural beings, continued to be in vogue, unaffected by the new religious connotation given to it in theological parlance. A different kind of survival occurs with the term for the Zoroastrian demon of sleep and sloth, *bušyasta-*, which seems to have been coined in a Zoroastrian milieu, since the word means literally something like ‘putting things off for the future’, and is thus typical of the category of abstract notions being turned in

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<sup>30</sup> See Darmesteter 1877:266; also Benveniste 1967; Burrows 1973. In Yt 10:34 there is an instance of a parallel usage of the two terms *daēva* and *mašya*. Gershevitch, in his translation of the text (1959:91), renders the phrase by ‘evil gods and men’. Although this conforms to traditional Zoroastrian usage, it is hardly satisfactory, for the counterpart of ‘men’ should be ‘gods’, not ‘evil gods’. At the same time, since in Zoroastrianism *daēva* had acquired a negative connotation, it is not easy for a translator to find an appropriate rendering that would contain these two different layers of meaning.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the following verses from the *Shāhnāme*, where *Ẓahhāk* is talking:

*hamī zīn fuzūn bāyad-am laškarī/ham az mardum u ham zi-dīv u  
parī//yakī laškarī xvāham angīxtan/abā dīv mardum bar-āmīxtan*  
(*ShN* 5:201–2). I need an army from among all this multitude/  
from among men as well as from among *dīvs* and *parīs*. //I wish to  
raise an army/and to mix together men with *dīvs*’

Although the speaker is a demonic figure, the combination of the two terms ‘men and *dīvs*’ in this verse is not entirely explicable by this fact. This seems to be an echo of the old Indian and Iranian *dvandva* compound, still alive in mediaeval Iran. See further Nöldeke 1915; 1923.

Zoroastrianism into divine names.<sup>32</sup> The word is, however, used in Judaeo-Persian of the Islamic period as a general, non-pejorative word for ‘sleep’, as evidence for the neutral sense that it may have held from the start.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from such survivals, which indicate the continued unofficial existence of older religious strata alongside the sanctioned theological usage, the kinship of man and the divine is expressed repeatedly on various levels. Human qualities and propensities are regularly conceived of as indicating the living presence of deities (or, in the worst case, of demons) within the person. This is a theme that occurs often in Pahlavi literature.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Wahman, the Good Spirit, is the one that organizes knowledge within man,<sup>35</sup> and other spirits assume involvement with the functioning of other powers in man. The delicate question as to the moral responsibility of the individual over his actions, which one could arguably expect to be devolved on the spirit resident in him, is apparently never raised. Quite to the contrary, it is tacitly assumed that this presence has nothing to do with the moral answerability of a man for his deeds. From this point of view, at least, it is understood that the

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Bartholomae 1904:970.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Asmussen 1982; for a reference to a Zoroastrian usage of the word in a neutral sense see Shaked 1982b:xi f., where it is suggested that the word may have originally had a neutral connotation.

<sup>34</sup> A typical expression for this is the first section of *Dk* VI:

In men’s mind there is thought. Sometimes a god holds a throne  
(in it), sometimes a demon holds up the way.

The passage continues with other constituents of the person, and is further elaborated by allusions to specific deities and demons that reside in these faculties of man, viz. Wahman, Srōsh, Spandarmad, Xrad and Dēn, and their demonic antagonists (*Dk* VI a1–1b; Shaked 1979:2 f., 226 f.). Compare also:

One over whose mind (*ox*) Wahman is a visitor, and (in whom)  
mind is the lord over his desire...(*Dk* III, 33:2; *DkM* 28; *DkB* 20).

A collection of other passages relating to the presence of Wahman in men is in Widengren 1945:46 f.

<sup>35</sup> *Dk* III 400:6.

presence of the spirits within the person is not a cause but an effect, or perhaps rather a symptom, of the person's moral and religious situation.

Man consists of divine elements, spiritually as well as physically. This comes out in quite straightforward terms.<sup>36</sup> From this point of view man is quite similar to the plant world and to that of the beneficial animals, but the intertwining of the divine within man seems to be understood to be particularly intimate, and is more often emphasized.

Divine presence within man, and the help and assistance given by the deities to man, form one aspect of the relationship between the divine world and man. Another aspect of that relationship is brought to light by the assistance given by man to the deity. This point is expressed by the frequent use of such terms as 'propitiation' or 'satisfaction' (*šnāyišn*), which are given to the Creator by the prayers or recitations that are addressed to him. There is, however, more to this relationship than that. Thus we read in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*:<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> In the following typical passage each member of the body 'belongs' to one of the Amesha Spenta:

*ēn-ez paydāg ku harw pēšag-ē mardomān mēnōg-ē xwēš. jān <ud> harw rōšnīh <i> abāg jān huš ud bōy ud abārīg ī az ēn mar ohrmazd xwēš, gōšt wahman, rag ud pīh ardawahišt, astag šahrewar, mazg spandarmad, xōn xurdad, mōy amurdad xwēš* (GBd 196; Anklesaria 1956:252, ch XXVIII:22). This, too, is manifest: Each limb of men belongs to a *mēnōg*. The *anima* and all the luminosity that exists with it, (as well as) intelligence and consciousness and the other (faculties) of this category, belong to Ohrmazd. The flesh belongs to Wahman, the veins and the fat belong to Ardawahisht, the bones to Shahrewar, the marrow to Spandarmad, the blood to Xurdad, and the hair to Amurdad.

<sup>37</sup> [3] *ud paydāg bawēd ku ka yazad-ēw + hayyār hē be ō dušaxw ne hilēnd*. [4] *ud paydāg bawēd ku ka((-š)) yazad-ēw hamēmār hē be ō wahišt ne hilēnd*. [5] *ka ((az)) ātaxš ī warhrān + nišānēd mard ēn sūdōmandīh hē + ku-š <az> hān yazad hayyārīh* <sup>a</sup> be ō dušaxw ne šawēd *ēw-ez-eš* <sup>b</sup> *arz ne paydāg* (PRiv 18g: 3–5. Williams 1990, II:43 translates differently).



[3] And it is revealed that when someone is a helper of a deity, he will not be allowed to go to hell. [4] And it is revealed that when one is an antagonist of a deity, he will not be allowed to go to paradise. [5] When he establishes a Wahrām fire there is this benefit (from it) to that man, that because of that help to a deity he will not go to hell; and yet the (full) value (of the fire) is not manifest.<sup>38</sup>

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Notes to the text: <sup>a</sup>The manuscripts add an *izafe*, which is better suppressed. <sup>b</sup>This could be emended slightly to read *ēwāz-eš*, which may be translated: ‘except that there will be no value manifest to him’. It is probably best, however, to separate this phrase from 18g:5 and to transfer it to the beginning of 18h:1, which will then begin with the words: ‘There is no (*ēw-ez-eš*) value (attached) to it (scil. to the Wahrām fire)’, as is indeed explained in detail in 18h:1.

<sup>38</sup> I.e., the value of the Wahrām fire is so high that it cannot be specified. This comes out with great clarity in the following section:

*ohrmazd guft ku-m ātaxš ī warhrām <ud> mard ī ((xwadāy ī) ahlaw a-m arz ne guft. ud agar-eš arz gōwēm ā-š hamāg ābādīh bun ud hamāg ahlāyīh paydāgīh bar ud hamāg spenāg mēnōg dām ī gētīg +wēnišn arz (PRiv 18h:1). Ohrmazd said, ‘I have not spoken of the value of the Fire of Wahrām and of the Righteous Man. If I do speak of its value, then its root is all prosperity, its product is the manifestation of all righteousness, and its value is the vision of all the sacred spirit by the material creation.’*

Compare *SDBd* 21, where we read inter alia:

**yky mrd 'šw v'tš vrhr'm dv cyz 'st kh qymt v'tj nš'yd gfm**

It is impossible to tell the value of two things, that of the Righteous Man and that of the Wahrām Fire.

In *PRiv* 18h:1 Williams strikes off the words *mard ī xwadāy ī ahlaw*, but (with the possible exception of the words *xwadāy ī*) there seems to be no need to do that; indeed, the relevance of these words is confirmed by the parallel text in *SDBd* 21.

The relationship between man and the deities is thus one of help, which can be two-sided, man helping the deity and also being helped by the *yazads*.

The distinction between man and the divine is somewhat blurred. Man being a microcosm, the texts present him as an entity that partakes of the attributes of the two conflicting powers contained within him. This comes out with particular force in the following passage:

Just as Ohrmazd is up on high, and Ahreman is down in the depth, and their two powers are in conflict with each other in the material world, so too man has two ‘winds’ within his body.<sup>39</sup> One (of these) is the wise ‘wind’ which is the soul, whose seat is in the brain of the head, whose substance is warm and humid, and whose motion is towards the navel. (Another) one is the sinful ‘wind’, whose substance is cold and dry, whose seat is in the buttocks, and whose motion is towards the womb.<sup>40</sup>

The interest of this passage lies, among other things, in the use of the term ‘wind’ for what is normally termed *mēnōg*, ‘spirit’. This seems to be a mechanical, almost physical, term for this notion, in contrast with the religious idea behind the use of the term ‘spirit’. The term *wād*, ‘wind’, is however made to bear, somewhat incongruously, the full weight of the theological term *mēnōg*, for it is divided into two entities, one ‘wise’, the other ‘sinful’.

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<sup>39</sup> Or rather: ‘person’. The term *tan* refers to the whole person, and sometimes implies essence, entity, as can be seen from the following examples:

*mihr ēwag ast u-š tan ēwag andar hamāg jānwar ast (PRiv 52:1)* Love is one, and its ‘body’ is one among all living beings (Williams 1990, II:90 translates differently). *120m abr ke-š tan <i> mēnōg hān ī gētīg āb dārēd (PRiv 52:1)*. Twelfthly, <he created> the cloud, whose *mēnōg* ‘body’ carries the *gētīg* water (compare Williams 1990, II:90).

<sup>40</sup> *aōn ceōn ohrmazd bālistīg ud ahreman zōfāyīg u-š āgnēn nērōg andar gētīg ēwag ō did kōxšišnīg mardom-ez 2 wād andar tan ēwag wād ī dānāg ī ast ruwān ke-š gāh pad mazg ī sar ud gōhr garm ud xwēd ud + rawišn ō nāfag ēwag wād ī bazag ke gōhr sard ud xušk ud gāh pad + kūn ud rawišn ō zahār (GBd 193–6; Anklesaria 1956:248 f.; ch XXVIII:12).*

Man has a specific function to fulfil in the world, which he does on behalf of Ohrmazd and as part of the divine scheme. This is set out in detail in the *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, a composition of the Islamic period which possibly contains ideas current three or four centuries earlier (although one cannot know with any certainty what elements are early). The Righteous Man is the one who praises, works, arranges, protects, serves and helps the spirits in the material world.<sup>41</sup>

Man should be like the gods. He should try to be like Wahman in possessing the two kinds of wisdom, innate wisdom and acquired wisdom, and in promoting peace in the world.<sup>42</sup>

A man in whose thinking the wisdom of Wahman resides, that wise spirit shows him the right way. Through the right way he knows the will of the Creator. By performing the will of the Creator he increases and proclaims him who will cause the Resurrection through the goodness of the Renovation.<sup>43</sup>

All of this is reported in the name of the ‘ancient wise men, according to the scriptures’. Ohrmazd is said to have enjoined on Zardusht to associate himself with Wahman in purity, that is to say, to cause Wahman to dwell in him. Whoever does this gets to know the two ways, that of good behaviour and that of bad behaviour.<sup>44</sup> The aim, as seen through these quotations involving Wahman, is to assimilate into oneself the presence of the deity.

Ohrmazd behaves as a man when he offers *myazd* offerings.<sup>45</sup> The similarity of man to god is seen in another way when we bear in mind that man forms part of the divine world, at least in the sense that ‘good men’ are often coupled together with the deities in veneration. ‘Good

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<sup>41</sup> *Dd* pur 21:3, transcribed and translated in Shaked 1969:207 f.

<sup>42</sup> *GBd* 163 f.; Anklesaria 1956:212 f. (ch XXVI:12–18). See Gignoux 1968a: 231 f.; Shaked 1987b:33.

<sup>43</sup> *ceōn pēšēnīgān + dānāgān dēnīgihā guft ku ke hān ī wahmanīg wehīh pad menišn mehmān dārēd ēg-eš hān ī weh mēnōg rāh ī rāst nimāyēd. pad rāh ī rāst kāmāg ī dādār šnāsēd. ud pad kāmīšngarīh ī dādār waxšēd winiyēd ke nekīh ī fraškerdīg āxēzēd* (*Dd* pur 2:18; my reading differs in some points from that of Molé 1963:476 f.).

<sup>44</sup> *Dd* pur 6:8; Molé 422 f. (7:7). Good and bad behaviour are expressed by *hurawišn* and *duš-rawīšn*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *PRiv* 16b:1 ff. In the myth of Zurvan too the deity offers sacrifices in order to obtain a son.

Men', *wehān*, are in a category apart, and resemble the gods in the awe that they command. A gnomic text sets an equation between good people, who belong to this world, and the gods, who belong to the other world, by saying:

A man who is here with the good will be there with the gods. A man who is here with the wicked will be there with the demons.<sup>46</sup>

According to another wisdom saying, to be quoted presently, a hierarchy exists. The terms of this hierarchy are arranged in a descending order: the gods—the righteous—the Iranians, standing in contrast to another hierarchical ladder, where the opposite sequence is formed by: the demons—the wicked—the non-Iranians:

The association of the Gāthā people is with the gods, their separation is from the demons and devils;...The association of the Hadha-mānthra people is with the righteous, and their separation is from the wicked;...The association of the Dād people is with Iranians, and their separation is from non-Iranians;...<sup>47</sup>

This saying uses the symbolic value of the three divisions of the Avesta to convey the sense of the hierarchy. In a similar vein, a somewhat playful interpretation of the phrase 'to eat with the gods' can make it to mean 'to eat with good people'.<sup>48</sup> Since these are wisdom sayings, one should not necessarily attach to them literal significance beyond the edifying function they are meant to fulfil, but they probably convey a current popular notion that the righteous, the good, live in close proximity to the gods, and that they embody divine presence in the world.<sup>49</sup>

The notion of 'Good People' (*wehān*) forms also part of the legal system. Decisions of a judge should be taken either on the basis of the Avesta and Zand, or by taking into account 'the consensus of the Good

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<sup>46</sup> *Dk* VI 133.

<sup>47</sup> *Dk* VI 206.

<sup>48</sup> *Dk* VI 319.

<sup>49</sup> For further material and comments see Shaked 1979:xxix f.

People',<sup>50</sup> a notion that may be a precursor of the Islamic idea of the consensus of the community.<sup>51</sup>

Somewhat parallel to 'Good people' is the term *ērān*, 'the Iranians'. Here is a passage where they function in parallel to *yazdān* 'the gods', just as we saw done with 'Good People':

His power (=the power of Wahman) is this: When the army of the gods and of the Iranians makes peace, they increase on account of<sup>52</sup> Wahman, when he exists<sup>53</sup> among them. When the army of the demons and of the non-Iranians makes belligerence, they go to ruin because of Wahman, when he does not exist among<sup>54</sup> them<sup>55</sup>.

The importance of the notions 'Good People' or 'the Righteous' in the practical life of Zoroastrians is seen in the requirement to practise the act of consultation with the wise or with the good as often as one can.<sup>56</sup> 'Consultation'<sup>57</sup> is an act of piety in which a Zoroastrian imitates the precedent of the prophet Zoroaster, who conferred with Ohrmazd.<sup>58</sup> The Avesta and Zoroastrianism as a whole are the outcome of these sessions.

<sup>50</sup> *hamdādestānīh ī wehān DkM 712:20 f. (= Dk VIII, 20:69).*

<sup>51</sup> *ijmā'*

<sup>52</sup> This is one of the rare occurrences in Pahlavi of the New Persian compound preposition *ba-rāy-e*.

<sup>53</sup> *šudan*, like *raftan*, is attested not infrequently in Middle Persian as a verb of existence. It is used in the sense of 'to become' in New Persian.

<sup>54</sup> The text (quoted in the following footnote) has a word written like **MTA'n** (the ideogram for *dehān*), which is surely a badly written form of the following word, *miyān*. The fact that it does not occur in TD<sub>1</sub> shows that this is a scribal error in TD<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>55</sup> *u-š amāwandīh ēd ku gund ī yazdān hān-ez ī ērān ka āštīh kunēnd be abzāyēnd pad rāy ī wahman ka-šān andar miyān šawēd, ud gund ī dēwān ud hān-ez ī anērān ka-šān anāstīh <kunēnd> abaxšēnd wahman rāy ka-šān ō ((dehān)) miyān ne shawēd (GBd 163:13–164:2; Anklesaria 1956:212 f. [XXVI: 15]; TD<sub>1</sub> fol. 681:11–15). The text is not in DH, falling as it does within a large lacuna of the manuscript. It is translated in Barr 1953:31. The translation in Gignoux 19683:232 is somewhat inaccurate.*

<sup>56</sup> References in Shaked 1979:xxix.

<sup>57</sup> *hampursagīh*.

<sup>58</sup> The term occurs, quite frequently, for the revelations transmitted to Zardusht by Ohrmazd in PRiv 47:1; 48:1.

A symbol of the presence of Ohrmazd in the material and visible world is the Righteous Man,<sup>59</sup> a quasi-mythological figure that represents the acme of human perfection. The identity between Ohrmazd and this figure is such that 'anyone who has caused pleasure or affliction to the Righteous Man, has caused pleasure or affliction to Ohrmazd'.<sup>60</sup> A fully elaborate doctrine of the Righteous Man is presented in the first three chapters of *Dādestān ī dēnīg*.<sup>61</sup> The three supreme representatives of this mythical conception are the Primal Man, Gayomard; the Prophet Zoroaster; and the ultimate Renovator of the world, the Sōšyāns.<sup>62</sup> There is thus a personalized Righteous Man figure for each of the three moments of the universe, 'its origin, its middle and its end', as the text puts it.<sup>63</sup>

The conception of man in Sasanian writings displays the same dualism that exists in the cosmos by the fact that humanity is divided into those who are good and those who are bad; it is also part of the dualistic system in that every individual human being is a playground for the good and the evil powers. At the same time man is a structure that recalls the divine world: it has a central power at the top, assisted by a number of powers, sometimes said to be six in number, like the Amahraspands, to complete the picture of the entourage of Ohrmazd. Beyond the dualistic scheme there is a strong presence in Sasanian Iran of the idea that man is an image of the universal structure, an idea well familiar from the Greek world, and possibly influenced by it. On the other hand, and well within the Zoroastrian tradition, it seems, is the idea of the Righteous Man, a figure of mythological dimensions, that represents the essence of human goodness and power, and is akin to Ohrmazd's presence in the world. The overwhelming figure of Gayomard, the mythological prototype of humanity, may have foreshadowed this Sasanian conception.

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<sup>59</sup> *mard ī ahlaw*, *GBd* 163:8; Anklesaria 1956:212 f. (ch. XXVI:10). See Gignoux 1968b:231 f. Above we have already encountered passages where this figure is mentioned together with the Wahrām Fire, these being the two things whose value cannot be specified (*PRiv* 18h:1 and *SDBd* 21, quoted above, p. 64).

<sup>60</sup> *GBd* 163:8 f.; Anklesaria 1956:212 (XXVI:11). See Shaked 1971:81, n. 73.

<sup>61</sup> A transcription and translation is in Molé 1963:473 ff.

<sup>62</sup> *Dd pur* 1:10–13; Molé 1963:474 f.

<sup>63</sup> *bun*, *miyān ud frazām*, *Dd pur* 1:9

To round up this string of Sasanian notions connected with the idea of man one should bear in mind that the essential powers in man, and especially what is known in Middle Persian as *ruwān*, the soul, are considered to be divine. One is encouraged to do things 'for the sake of one's soul', a phrase that denotes performing pious deeds. To worship one's soul is an expression of piety that is well rooted in the Sasanian tradition. The righteous, the good, seem to constitute a divine presence in this world, and the attitude towards them is part of Zoroastrian worship.

There is no sharp transition in Iran from the divine to the human. The distinction seems more like a gentle gradation than like a gap. The Iranian attitude stands in sharp contrast to the Jewish and Christian ideas about man and the divine world, where Man and the Divine occupy two poles between which there is an unbridgeable chasm. The Zoroastrian view is closer to that of the Manichaeans, although the doctrinal premises that lead to this similarity of view are sharply divergent. In this typology official Islam stands squarely on the side of Judaism and Christianity. Sufism, however, especially in its bolder expressions, constitutes a separate religious phenomenon within Islam, and belongs largely to the Iranian type of religious thinking. These observations are meant to be typological rather than indicative of historical or genetic connections. It is not unlikely, however, that these affinities have something to do with the history of the transmission of ideas from Iran to Islam, a field which still requires close examination.

## IV

# A Hierarchy of Religious Expressions

IT HAS been partly our aim in these discussions to point out the considerable diversity of faith and doctrine that existed in the Sasanian religion, and more specifically in Sasanian Zoroastrianism. We have dealt previously chiefly with cases where different schools of interpretation were in action, and where no claim could be made that a hierarchically significant difference existed between those views. These distinctions may be called 'horizontal'. The distinctions we shall examine in the present chapter are capable of creating, if my interpretation is correct, a hierarchical layering of the community, and may therefore be called 'vertical'.

We should perhaps make it clear at the outset that the social hierarchy we are talking about in this context is not based on class distinctions in the usual sense of the term. It is not a question of the rich against the poor, or of a nobility set up against the common people. Many religions display a tendency to place certain types of believers higher up the scale than others, although this vertical differentiation may often be at odds with the distinctions between social classes. The rich, the noble, the powerful, may be regarded as constituting an upper class in the secular, or lay, society, while the dominant religious culture may regard the poor, the downtrodden, those dedicated exclusively to piety or to the study of the scriptures, as worthy of special honour. In several religions of the Near East—besides Judaism, Christianity and Islam, also Zoroastrianism,<sup>1</sup> and of course the Indian religions—the poor are regarded as privileged in some significant religious sense. This may come as a surprise to those who tend to overemphasize the world-affirming character of Zoroastrianism (a character which it certainly possesses). What virtue could there be in poverty, since it does not

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Barr 1953; Shaked 1979:xxxviii ff.



enhance the prosperity of the world, one may ask. And yet Zoroastrianism, whether by influence of other religions or on its own, attaches great importance not only to the help that should be given to the unfortunate poor, but regards the very state of poverty as a virtue. The poor seem to enjoy such high religious prestige that certain Zoroastrian texts deem it necessary to admonish the believers not to regard all poor people as possessing high merit automatically, but only those who are deserving, that is to say, those who are pious and righteous.<sup>2</sup>

Great and complex religions usually have several of these hierarchies competing with each other or clashing among themselves at any given time, perhaps in different circles; sometimes a combination of such hierarchical preferences may prevail. The group of the elect in a given religion may be constituted of a diversity of people, sometimes with clashing or conflicting definitions.

In rabbinic Judaism the official holders of the title *rabbi*, literally 'my master', who normally hold a commission on behalf of a congregation, may have a claim to belong to such a group. Nevertheless, the truly learned, who may not be holders of an office or a title, have often been regarded as worthy of a higher religious distinction. In another Jewish milieu (for example, among the early *Hekhalot* mystics, of whom we know historically next to nothing, or among the more recent hasidic circles), men of exceptional piety, sometimes men with unusual mystical powers, may be taken to represent the highest religious endowment, even though they may not be distinguished by their learning. The type of religious attitudes that different people in the same religious tradition may hold tends to vary greatly. The hierarchies thus created would often be completely different within one and the same tradition at the same period of time.

The middle class, from the religious point of view, consists of people who are attached to the received religion. They follow the dictates of the priesthood and observe the prescriptions received by tradition. Members of the religious elite may look upon them patronizingly. They may

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Dk* VI 71, 282, C23–C24; Shaked 1979:xxxviii. That the poor enjoyed special prestige seems already hinted at in the Achaemenian inscriptions, when Darius takes the trouble to emphasize that he prevented wrong to the weak person by a mighty one, or to a mighty person by a weak one (DNb 8f.; cf. Kent 1953:138). A poor and weak person can only do wrong to a mighty one if the ruler and judge take his side because he is poor and weak, and it is presumably this situation that makes it necessary for the king to declare his impartiality.

regard them as the necessary backbone of a religious society, which enables the few endowed individuals to reach those heights that only they are capable of attaining. Such groups constitute a small minority of the community. Most members, while not following the way of life of the elect few, look up to them with admiration as accomplishing a type of religious behaviour that is hard to attain.

The opposite pole to this is what we would like to call lower-class religion. This term is used not in a sociological sense, but as reflecting the presumed religious values of the society in question. As against the common folk who are scrupulous in observing the institutionally sanctioned religion, there are groups of people who preserve forms of religiosity that are considered by the religious establishment to be substandard. While largely adhering to the conventional religion of the community, these people also follow practices which are frowned upon or rejected by the religious leaders of the community. Such practices may constitute a survival from an older indigenous religion, or a borrowing from neighbouring cultures, or simply forms of religious behaviour that are regarded by the dominant class in the religion as not conforming to the letter or spirit of the scriptures. Quite often in the religions of the Near East these are practices which have to do with magic, sorcery or witchcraft (whatever the precise definitions of these different designations).<sup>3</sup> In other cases these may be rituals which have failed to be accepted into the religious canon, but which nevertheless enjoy a certain popularity, although they do not conform to scriptural authority.

The attitude of the religious establishment to such cults may vary from an indulgent acceptance to a discouraging grunt, or even, in some cases, to outright condemnation and persecution. What is typical of these 'low-class' or 'popular' cults is that they are often followed by the majority of the population, who nevertheless also formally accept and observe the mainstream religion, and refuse to see any incongruity between the two. Criticism of this kind of popular religion may be voiced by religious purists. They tend to point out the incongruity between the official religious teachings and the popular cult.

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<sup>3</sup> The definitions given to these terms by most anthropologists, following the usage suggested by Evans-Pritchard 1937, are not very helpful for understanding the phenomena of ancient Near Eastern culture. The current mood is to deny magic as a separate category of religious behaviour (see, for example, Penner 1989), but this goes against the definitions used within the cultures we are studying, and it is their mode of thinking we aim at understanding, not anthropological theories.

In the following I shall try to show, despite the severe limitations of the material, that there are indications for the existence of such a vertical layering of the religious community in Sasanian Iran, although we cannot tell what importance this differentiation held for members of the society. We shall look in the present chapter at the two poles of the religious community in Sasanian Iran, from the point of view of this reconstructed hierarchy: at the circles of the élite on the one hand, and at those who adhered to popular types of religion on the other.

The Pahlavi books make at least sporadic use of the term *rāz* 'secret' in a manner that suggests that there were certain esoteric elements in the teachings of the pious Zoroastrians of the Sasanian period.<sup>4</sup> Giuseppe Messina suggested that in the teachings of Zoroaster, in the Gathas, there is already a hint of esoteric tendencies<sup>5</sup>—of the kind, it may be added, that was also current in ancient India, where certain teachings of

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<sup>4</sup> See Shaked 1969. This was dismissed (somewhat too easily, I feel) in Bailey's introduction to the new edition (1971:xxix) of his *Zoroastrian problems in the ninth-century books*. Much has been written about the supposed mystery-type religion that the ancient Iranians might have possessed (see, with negative conclusions, Colpe 1975), but this is unrelated to our present discussion. Frye 1967:79; 1968:589 dismissed the term *rāz* from a discussion of Iranian influences on Judaism, or of an Iranian mystery religion, since its precise connotation in ancient Iranian is not known. These strictures are important: one should be careful not to construct historical hypotheses, or to claim cultural contact, on the basis of a single word. It is clear, to my mind, that the term had a religious significance in late Zoroastrianism, but the idea of a 'mystery cult', with its Hellenistic associations, seems inapplicable. Frye has since (1975) written with approval of the possibility of Iranian contacts with Judaism, although from a different angle.

<sup>5</sup> Messina 1930:80 ff. Y 48:3, where an allusion to 'secret things' to be taught by Ahura Mazdā to the knower is found, was associated by Russell (1988/89: 166, n. 19) with the events of eschatology. This is possible. The Pahlavi version of the Yasna renders this as follows:

*nihānīhā saxwan ī ahlamōgīhā +u-š cārag bē gōwēd (PhLY 210),*

which I believe could be translated:

He will tell secret things concerning heresy and its remedy  
(scil. the remedy to be used against it).

Russell (ibid.) has a different proposal.

the Upanishads were only meant to be conveyed to the initiates.<sup>6</sup> As far as the teachings of Zoroaster are concerned, this cannot be held to be conclusively demonstrated. Indeed, the spirit of Zoroaster's teaching is such that wide dissemination of the faith seems essential to it. The Pahlavi writings, however, seem to refer quite plainly to such elements, although it is by no means easy to define their precise sense and purpose. There appear to have existed religious doctrines that were restricted to people deemed to possess a higher type of piety. Speculation about the possible nature of these esoteric doctrines may lead us to think of an allegorical, as opposed to a literal, understanding of the ritual prescriptions and of the mythical stories. This is somewhat speculative, but in view of the prevalence in neighbouring religions of such restrictive élitist doctrines—one may think of Manichaeism, with its institutional division into *auditores* and *electi*,<sup>7</sup> of the Mandaean religion, which also has similar elements in it, and of the Mazdakite movement, which probably belongs to the same type of religion<sup>8</sup>—the assumption that a similar phenomenon existed in Zoroastrianism should not come as a surprise. Judaism of the period seems to have had its own brand of esotericism. This is the conclusion one may draw from the existence of writings that go under the general title of *Hekhalot* or *Merkava*, a group of writings that has been uncovered and studied with considerable attention over the past few decades.<sup>9</sup>

When we talk of secret teachings, this need have nothing to do with occultism in the modern sense of the term, with the mystery cults of the ancient world, or with anything that suggests irrationality and ecstasy. It does not stand in contrast to the open propagation of the mainstream

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. *Chhandogya Upanishad* 3.11.5.

<sup>7</sup> It is not certain that there was an element of esotericism in the doctrines transmitted to the Manichaean *electi*. On this question see Stroumsa 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. further below. An analysis of the term *mysterion/rāz* in Judaism and early Christianity is done by J.Z. Smith 1990:73 ff. Cf. also the study of the Greek mystery cults by Burkert 1987; J.Z. Smith 1990:125 ff.

<sup>9</sup> For the Jewish phenomenon (perhaps primarily a Palestinian creation, rather than Babylonian), the pioneering research of Scholem 1965 is essential; see further Gruenwald 1980; 1988; Alexander 1983; Schäfer 1988, and the systematic edition of the texts by Peter Schäfer (1981; 1984; 1987).

religion of which it forms part, or to the desire that the whole of mankind should be party to the truths contained in the religion.<sup>10</sup> In our present usage the term suggests only that there were groups who, while regarding themselves as faithful adherents of Zoroastrianism, held certain ideas that they considered should not be divulged to the general Zoroastrian public. These ideas had to do perhaps with a deeper or more spiritual interpretation of the tenets of the religion. The same phenomenon is attested in various periods in Judaism and Islam, two religions which pride themselves on their openness and rationality, the latter in particular on its universalism.

One indication of the existence of a restricted type of religion in Sasanian Iran is the persistent reference in Zoroastrian and Arabic writings to the limitations imposed on disseminating the Zoroastrian scriptures to the common people.<sup>11</sup> Note the words of the great Muslim historian and littérateur Miskawayhi, himself of Persian origin, who writes:

In his [Bishtāsf's] time there arose Zardusht. He (i.e., the latter) called upon [Bishtāsf]<sup>12</sup> to accept his religion, but he [i.e., Bishtāsf] refused, though afterwards he recognized the truth of Zardusht's teaching and accepted that which he called him [to accept]. He brought to him a book that was written on the hides of 12,000 cows...Bishtāsf ordered it [to be placed] in Istakhr. He placed it under the protection of the *hirbidhs*,<sup>13</sup> and forbade teaching it to the common people.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> These are the objections wrongly voiced against using such a term by de Menasce 1945 (see the reference in Shaked 1969:176), and in Bailey's introduction to the 1971 edition of his *Zoroastrian problems*.

<sup>11</sup> See Shaked 1969:187 ff., where further quotations are given. It may be noted that the Pahlavi and Avestan scripts were so inaccessible to most people that an advice could be given (probably in the Muslim period) to write secrets in one of those scripts: 'A secret should be written in Avesta characters or *Uzväriš*' (*PersRiv*, tr. Dhabhar, p. 347).

<sup>12</sup> The text says: 'He called upon him'.

<sup>13</sup> The priests.

<sup>14</sup> *Tajārib*, 53–54. The text is as follows:

*wa-zahara fī ayyāmihi zardušt wa-arādahu 'alā qabūli dīnihi fa-mtana'a min dhālika thumma šaddaqahu wa-qabila mā da'āhu ilayhi wa-atāhu bihi min kitābin yuktabu fī jildi thnatay 'ašarata alfa baqaratin hafṛan fī l-julādi wa-naqšan bi-l-dhahabi wa-sayyara bištāsf dhālika bi-ištaxr wa-wakkala bihi l-harābidhata wa-mana'a ta' līmahu l-'ammata.*

There is a hierarchy of esotericism in the Pahlavi passages. The *zand* constitutes a fairly lax restriction, imposed vaguely on unauthorized people, while concepts like *dēn* and *rāz* are to be kept limited to a much closer circle.<sup>15</sup> The reason why *zand* was restricted is easy enough to understand: it is the tool of interpretation which enables heretics and people of deviant religion to influence the public and convince people that they represent the line of orthodoxy. This explanation finds expression in Zoroastrian as well as Arabic sources, and it seems to make very good sense, particularly when we consider that the kings, for

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Another such report, quite obviously referring to the later period, is in the work of al-ʿAmīrī, *Al-ʿilām bi-manāqib al-islām*; the relevant passage was published and translated by Vadet 1964:262 ff.

Other foreign observers, too, allude to the restricted nature of the Zoroastrian religion. Thus, Agathias says concerning Ardashīr, the first Sasanian king: 'This man was bound by the rites of the Magi, and a practitioner of the secrets' (Agathias II, 26:3; tr. Cameron 1969/70:87). According to Cameron (op.cit., 108), this expression means 'doctrines' or mysteries. Cf. also in Syriac, Bedjan 1895:403; quoted Nau 1927:177 f. On the reputation of the Persians for secret ritual we learn also from a polemical passage in Arnobius:

quid illi sit volunt secretarium artium ritus, quibus adfamini nescio quas potestates, ut sint vobis placidae neque ad sedes remeantibus patrias obstacula impeditionis opponant (Arnobius, *Adv. nationes* II: 13; Bousset 1901 [quoted from Bousset 1960: 34]; cf. also Widengren 1965:193).

What do these rites with secret arts, through which there are addressed I do not know what powers, so that they should be amenable to you and that they should not place obstacles in the way of those who return to the paternal abodes, wish (to convey)?

<sup>15</sup> It may be in place to quote here a few references in addition to those already adduced in Shaked 1969:185 ff.:

*if' al sirraka li-man 'anāhu mā 'anāka; if' al ḥadīthaka ma'a ahli l-marātīb* (Turṭūšī, *Sirāj* 113). Place your secret with someone who is concerned with the same things which concern you. Place your talk with those who possess [high spiritual?] degrees.

their own part, had their special interest in limiting access to the scriptures: they wanted to exercise control over possible contenders to the title of a religious head of the Zoroastrian community. In the late Sasanian period we indeed find reports about explicit restriction imposed on all theological discussions in the kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

As for the terms *rāz*, *wāzag*, and similar expressions, no political or utilitarian motive can be detected behind their use. Knowledge of *rāz* is

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Cf. also op.cit., p. 131 (on the inner circle of a ruler). An interesting passage concerning the limitation of teaching the Zoroastrian scriptures by Anōsharwān makes this into a restriction that has to do primarily not with what kind of people study the texts, but with the place where they are studied. According to this notice (Ibn Ḥazm, *Fiṣal*, 1:199), the king only allowed his subjects to study their 'religion' (*dēn*, which is the Middle Persian term for the sacred scriptures) in two places: Ardashīr-Khurra and Fasā, in the district of Dārābjird. (All of these toponyms, in the province of Fārs, are slightly corrupt in the text, but can be reconstructed with a fair amount of probability). Previously, according to the same source, the teaching was only done in *Iṣṭakhr*. The same source adds that the teaching (even in those limited places) was only allowed to some special or privileged people (*wakāna lā yubāḥu illā li-qawmin khaṣā'isa*). This account seems to conflate two separate matters: the two centres in which the text of the Avesta and Zand was kept, and the restriction on its teaching. As to the places for keeping the Avesta and Zand, these were, according to one, rather questionable interpretation, *Iṣṭakhr* and Shīz (Wikander 1946:142 ff.; cf. the cogent counter arguments in Boyce and Grenet 1991:78, n. 59). It is, however, valuable in providing another, seemingly independent source for this matter, based as it is, by its own claim, on the Sasanian *Khwadāy-nāmag*. See a discussion of this passage from a different point of view in Pines 1990:43 ff.

<sup>16</sup> We read the following sentence concerning the time of Khusrau Anōshagruwān: 'He caused the people of his kingdom to be all adherents of the religion of the Majūs (i.e. Zoroastrianism), and forbade them to engage in (theological) speculation, dispute, and polemics concerning sects' (*Mas'ūdī Murūj*, 1:290), quoted in Shaked 1969:187, n. 33, where further material is quoted.

understood to contain the great mysteries of the universe,<sup>17</sup> the mysteries of eschatology,<sup>18</sup> or else the mystery of man's relationship to God,<sup>19</sup> or the allegorical interpretation of the Zoroastrian scriptures.<sup>20</sup> This mystery is sometimes said to be revealed, as we have seen, to the 'eye of the soul'.<sup>21</sup>

It is difficult to penetrate into the contents of the doctrines of these élite religious circles, but it may be sufficient to establish the fact that Sasanian Zoroastrianism was not just a ritualistic religion, despite the central position that ritual has always occupied in the life of the Zoroastrian community. It seems possible to conclude that Zoroastrianism relied on a deep religious experience, in some cases reserved for those few persons who were capable of reaching to a higher type of religious awareness than common believers.

This insight may help answer the puzzle that has arisen with regard to the origins of Islamic mysticism. It is a fact that much of the development of Islamic mysticism and esotericism took place on Iranian ground, and that some of the prominent protagonists of those tendencies in Islam were of Persian origin, sometimes at a distance of no more than

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. e.g. *Dk* VII 4:84, quoted above. This is of course also the normal usage of the term in Christian writings. Compare, for example, the language used in Syriac within the Persian domain: 'For the knowledge of the hidden things and the glorious mysteries of Divine Providence is higher than everything' (Bedjan 1891:15, lines 2–3).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. above, p. 68, n. 58.

<sup>19</sup> The *Shāhnāme* often preserves reminiscences of Zoroastrian usage. I believe this is the case in the following quotation which illustrates our point:

*sipah rā zi-rāh-i badī bāz dast/ki bā pāk yazdān ba-dil rāz dast*  
(*ShN* 9:19). He held the army away from evil ways, because he held  
a secret in his heart with the holy God.

The 'mystery' alluded to here is presumably the intimate connection between man and god.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Shaked 1969.

<sup>21</sup> *Dk* VII 4:84, quoted above, Lecture 2, p. 46.



one or two generations away from their Zoroastrian forbears.<sup>22</sup> One may well wonder whether this type of deeply-felt personal religiosity, which included far-reaching ecstatic identification of the mystic with the deity, was alien to the Persian converts to Islam before their conversion. If that had been the case, how could they become such great masters of this type of religion, which was new to Islam itself, within such a brief period of time? These were matters about which orthodox Muslim circles felt uneasy and which they regarded with mistrust. The language used by western Islamic mystics was in the early period rather mild, while in the eastern regions, those that were part of the Iranian cultural sphere, mystics had a special taste for a radical type of mysticism. It makes sense to assume that they brought with them into their new religion elements of such attitudes, which were of course adapted to the teachings and language of Islam. Now that we have some evidence for the existence of a certain esotericism in Iran, and for a far-reaching conception of the identity of man with the divine world, the continuity from Iran to Islam may seem smoother and more natural.<sup>23</sup>

It may be recalled that the expressions of élitist attitudes are associated in the texts with the tendency to bar most members of the Zoroastrian community from access to an independent study of the scriptures, and especially of the *zand*, the technique of interpreting the scriptures in the vernacular. This is justified by the fear of spreading heresy in the country. Studying Avesta and Zand could have been one of the highest signs of piety, but it never became a major act of religious devotion, as Torah learning was in Judaism and as Qur'ān and allied study later became in Islam. On the contrary, the indiscriminate dissemination of knowledge of the scriptures was considered to contain potential harm. The priestly hierarchy on the one hand, and the court on the other, each had its own reasons for thinking that the whole structure of the religion and the community would be in danger if access to the scriptures were made easily available to all. Although the notion of preventing access to the religious truths is alien to Judaism and Christianity, we have an interesting analogy with such a precautionary

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<sup>22</sup> One may think, for example, of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, *al-Ḥakīm* al-Tirmidhī, and many others.

<sup>23</sup> A study of Islamic mystical and esoteric notions that may be identified with Iranian antecedents was undertaken by Blochet (see especially 1902; 1913); Schaeder 1925. See also the writings of Corbin (especially 1960). I hope to come back to this subject on a different occasion.

measure in the history of the Persian Christian church of the Sasanian period. Acacius the patriarch, after 484 CE, prescribed that the monks and the pious should live away from the people, not in towns and villages, so as not to spoil the customs of the church and not to cause rifts among the populace.<sup>24</sup> A similar ban was imposed in Judaism, perhaps somewhat earlier, on the study of certain elaborations on the theme of the origins of the godhead and the world and the descriptions of the upper regions (known under the title *ma'ase bereshit* or *ma'ase merkava*), and this is also sometimes justified by reference to the fear of heresy, although the Jewish allusions on this point are not so clear.<sup>25</sup>

The other pole of religious experience and practice may be termed for the sake of convenience 'low religion', without wishing to convey by this term a value judgement, or indeed any association with the similar-sounding term in the Anglican church. What we have in mind is the religious practices of common people, as opposed to those of priests and religious commentators, in the Sasanian period, which may not conform to the prescriptions of the established religion. We have very few explicit references in the literature to these practices, and cannot tell whether the distinction between what we are calling low religion and the established religion would have been acceptable to members of the society themselves.

It may be helpful to glance at what historians of the Roman world in Late Antiquity do with their much greater abundance of material. With the advent of Christianity there seems to be a certain levelling of the distinctions between intellectuals and the uneducated masses. 'There is no way of defining a clear separation between an upper-class culture and a lower-class culture in the second half of the fourth century and in the first half of the fifth century'—this is a conclusion drawn for the Roman world by Arnaldo Momigliano,<sup>26</sup> who goes on to state that this attitude was also forced upon pagan writers of the period under the impact of Christianity. In Sasanian Iran the ancient religion still held its own and was not going to give way to Christianity. It was only about to crumble under the military might of the Muslim armies. There is reason to believe that the separation of society into established religion and popular cults, even if it was not formalized, and was probably never

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Chr Seert*. PO 7:122 f.

<sup>25</sup> Some of the history of the scholarly discussion of these problems is in Scholem 1965:9 ff.; Halperin 1980:1 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Momigliano 1977:155.

formulated in these terms, would afford a useful peephole into an enclosed area of which very little has survived across the centuries of destruction and alien rule.

We have a fair amount of varied evidence for uncanonical religion in the Sasanian period, although much of it derives from the religious expressions of other communities in the realm. The practice of magic was a widespread marginal religious occupation in Sasanian Babylonia. It can be called 'marginal' only in the sense that it was not usually considered a worthy matter for canonical literature, and was relegated to the status of oral or extra-canonical transmission. It was far from marginal in any other sense. Indeed, from the number of people who seem to have practised it, and from the frequency of this practice as compared to any other form of religious observance in the period, it seems that this was a very prominent type of religious attitude. If we consider the proportion of magical objects unearthed in archaeological excavations in Sasanian Babylonia, as compared to objects of the established religions, I believe that there is an inordinate number of magical texts. This contrast may be partly explained by considering the materials used. While in Judaism, for example, magic texts were normally written on pottery bowls, 'proper' religious items such as *mezuza* or *tefillin* would be inscribed on leather, which is a perishable material. One would, however, expect to find some Jewish religious inscriptions on stone, connected, for example, with synagogues or cemeteries, but to my knowledge no such inscriptions have been unearthed. Magic objects thus constitute the most conspicuous presence of ritual items in Babylonian houses.

There were four languages (or rather scripts) used for these magical inscriptions: Jewish Aramaic written in the square Hebrew script characteristic of Jewish writings (Aramaic was always mixed in this period with Hebrew elements, either as biblical quotations or in the form of words or phrases that were part of the language of the Jews); Mandaic, a language used by a fairly small religious community which survives to the present day and whose vocabulary includes expressions from their own religious world; Syriac, which was used by Christians as well as by the indigenous pagan population; and Pahlavi. The Syriac magic bowls, with the exception of a small minority, contain no references to specific Christian notions, and may be assumed to have been prepared largely by pagan practitioners. It is, however, interesting to note that there is very little explicit pagan terminology on the Syriac bowls, at any rate nothing more than what can be detected in the Jewish and Mandaic ones. In these 'pagan' Syriac bowls there are, on the other

hand, quite a few Jewish elements, such as exist also in the Jewish and Mandaic bowls. The interdenominational language of magic can be said to have been strongly impregnated by Jewish formulae, and reflected on the whole very little of the pagan culture of Babylonia.

Another interesting observation is that although Syriac, the language represented by the 'pagan' bowls, was used by the larger part of the population, in quantity Syriac bowls are far less numerous than the Jewish bowls among the finds from Babylonia. This probably means that there were fewer practitioners of magic whose language of writing was Syriac than there were those who used Jewish Aramaic as their script.

The conclusion which seems to emerge from these findings is that the practice of magic, at least in so far as it is expressed in bowl amulets, was strongly dominated by the presence of Jewish specialists and by the use of Jewish formulae. These two facts may of course have been complementary. There were probably fewer non-Jews who were capable of using the written magical formulae, the idiom of which was so strongly imbued with Jewish elements; and the Jewish elements were so dominant because the Jews may have held a near monopoly of the market.

The smallest group among magic writings from Iran and Mesopotamia, found partly in controlled excavations but mostly in the antique market, uses the Pahlavi script. This was the mode of writing used by the Iranian population, which was presumably generally Zoroastrian. The language represented by it is usually Middle Persian, although there is some evidence of its use also for Parthian.<sup>27</sup> Bowls written in Pahlavi are very few in number. This may seem surprising, for judging by their ratio of the population, one would have expected Syriac and Pahlavi writings to constitute a much larger proportion among the bowl inscriptions. It would seem to be rather unlikely that most of

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<sup>27</sup> In the few cases where Parthian is attested in literary writings it may have involved a kind of translation process: the text was largely retained in Parthian, which was the language in which it was orally transmitted, but it was apparently written down in the Pahlavi script by people whose language was Middle Persian, and who adapted the text, whether deliberately or as part of their lack of competence in Parthian, to the language spoken by them. The result is a hybrid text. The best-known compositions falling in this category are *Draxt asūrīg* and *Ayād-gār ī Zarērān*.

the Christian, pagan and Zoroastrian population had no interest in magic,<sup>28</sup> and an explanation is called for in order to account for the paucity of bowls in the languages of the majority. One possible explanation would be that they were less inclined to use inscribed formulae, such as were used by the Jews and the Mandaeans. Another quite likely assumption would be that many of the bowls inscribed by Jews and Mandaeans were intended for use by members of the other communities. In the case of the Jewish bowls the personal names of the clients mentioned in the bowl inscriptions are rarely typical Jewish names. They are for the most part Persian or Aramaic. This is of course no proof, because Jews often used the same names as their non-Jewish neighbours. But at least it may be said that the hypothesis that the bowls were often prepared by Jews for use by non-Jews is not contradicted by the evidence of the proper names. The small number of Pahlavi bowls may suggest that Zoroastrian practitioners of this form of magic were not numerous, perhaps because literacy in Pahlavi was not as widespread as that in Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>29</sup>

That Zoroastrians did not spurn magical practices we learn of course from the very fact that we do have some magic bowls in Pahlavi.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately they are very difficult to read. No safe decipherment of a whole bowl inscription has yet been made. There is one case of an amulet on stone inscribed in Pahlavi, read many years ago by West,<sup>31</sup> with doubtful interpretation. There is also at least one treatise extant in Arabic on the arts of divination which claims, quite plausibly, to be

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<sup>28</sup> We have of course positive evidence to the contrary. We shall discuss the Zoroastrians in this connection somewhat further on, and the Christian literature of the period is replete with references to magic practices.

<sup>29</sup> A short discussion of these problems is in Naveh and Shaked 1985:18.

<sup>30</sup> I have a small collection of photographs of Pahlavi bowls which have come to my notice, and which I hope to be able to publish, with at least partial readings. Some Parthian amulets are also known to exist. Bivar (1967) published one (with uncertain reading, and unclear function. Cf. the reading offered by Livshits 1977:176, n. 41; see also Livshits and Xurshudjan 1989:172, n. 17); another one is in Paris, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, cf. Livshits 1977:176, n. 41.

<sup>31</sup> See E.W. West 1882b. A similar undecipherable magical inscription in Pahlavi script is preserved in Boston.

based on a Persian model.<sup>32</sup> The notion of the ubiquitous lurking presence of demons, who are to blame for any sickness or mishap that befalls us, would encourage energetic measures to be taken against them. In the neighbouring religions this business was commonly relegated to magic, but in Zoroastrianism, which makes it its own affair to fight the demons, one could assume that there would be no room left for magic as distinct from official religion.

The Zoroastrian liturgy is indeed partly devoted to practices which we would classify as magical: formulae (the usual term used is *nērang*) against snake bites, insects, fever, and others. Such interpenetration of the two domains, magic and religion, is typical of the other religions of the region as well, for there is no clear dividing line between them. Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, however, have a built-in tendency towards preoccupation with the demonic interference in the world, that is to say with what we would normally associate with magical practices.<sup>33</sup> And yet it seems that the need for some free, personal, non-institutional outlet for protection from harm and for individual manipulation of the supernatural powers was present among the Zoroastrians no less than among members of the other communities. Many of them, to judge from the typical Zoroastrian names of clients mentioned on several Jewish, Mandaic and Syriac bowls, may indeed have taken advantage of the skills of specialists in magic among Jews and Mandaeans.

Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, and in a later period also Islam, each religion in its own way, strongly condemned the practice of magic, but all had nevertheless to put up with its persistence. Different strategies were used to justify its toleration. Magic was generally equated with the pagan practices of alien religions. If one uses magic formulae that invoke the holy names of one's own religion, this is by definition not magic, but part of the legitimate religious ritual. The attacks on magic thus take on the form of attacks on other religions, and

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<sup>32</sup> It is called *Bab al-ʿirāfa wa-l-zajr wa-l-firasa ʿalā madhhabi l-furs*, and was edited and translated into Russian by Inostrantsev 1907/8.

<sup>33</sup> See Henning's comments in his article on the Manichaean amulets (1947:39). J.J.Modi has devoted a whole range of articles to the description of various charms and amulets used by Zoroastrians on various occasions; cf. Modi 1892; 1894; 19003; 1900b; 1901 (which I have not been able to see); 1909; 1918: 319 f. (this is about astrological notions connected with the moon). Some further material will be found in J.Hampel's article 'Amulett' in: Colpe 1974/82:267–268.

it is often difficult to decide whether, when we have condemnation of magical practices in Zoroastrian literature (under the heading of *jādūgīh*), this is indeed polemics against sorcery, or against the worship of alien deities, called ‘sorcery’ as a term of abuse. Such polemics, using the label ‘sorcery’, could even be directed against Zoroastrian rituals that are rejected by the writer, or against any deviation from the Zoroastrian norm.<sup>34</sup> Each one of these could be called, with good reason from the point of view of a Zoroastrian writer, *jādūgīh*. From the standpoint of an outside observer, there is little difference between legitimate religion and magic. Both can use the same language and practically the same ritual. Rather than immerse ourselves in discussions of such distinctions, we can do nothing better than describe the attitudes expressed by the protagonists themselves.

As soon as he was given enough authority by the king, the Christian catholicos under Yazdigird I (399–420), turned his attention to stamping out magic. He ordered the other Christian priests to burn any house in which they found ‘anything of the magical sciences and the instruments of Magianism’.<sup>35</sup> He might have meant by this injunction that they should fight magical practices, which he equated with the Zoroastrian religion; or else that they should fight Zoroastrianism, to which he gave the pejorative label of magic. The following phrase, however, mentions that Marcionites and Manichaeans had mingled with the Christians, and it seems that the real target of this campaign was neither magic nor

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<sup>34</sup> A typical example of the use of the pejorative term ‘witch’ without any apparent specific connotation is in *PRiv* 18d:11:

*cahārom hān ka-m jeh ī jādūg pad ādišt andar hilēnd ud wars  
wizārēnd ud* <sup>+</sup>*gēs* *ōrūnēnd ud man hān I awēšān wars ud rēm  
xwarēm.*

Fourthly, when they let a whore who is a sorcerer come to the fire-stand, and they part (their) hair and pluck (their) locks, and I (=the fire) eat that hair and impurity of theirs. (Cf. Williams 1990, II:37).

The fire complains here of impurity caused to it by women who are not careful enough that no dead matter should reach it from their hair when they make their toilet. Women acting in this manner are given both titles of abuse, ‘whore’ and ‘sorcerer’.

<sup>35</sup> PO 5:325.

Zoroastrianism, but those heresies. The two heresies were apparently identified, in order to put them to shame, with both magic and Zoroastrianism.

We cannot leave this subject without touching on a problem connected with the Magian priesthood. The Magians had a great reputation as magicians, and they acquired it not only among foreigners but also in Iran itself. The Persian national epic contains numerous references to the supernatural power of the magi. Here are some examples:

He ordered that all the *mōbads* and *rads*, the astrologers and the wise, be assembled in the presence of the supreme throne in order to search into the matter of the sphere.<sup>36</sup>

When there is a need to perform a ‘caesarean’ incision in order to cause the birth of Rustam, a *mōbad* appears and does it:

There came a skilful *mōbad* and made that moon-faced lady drunk with wine.<sup>37</sup>

A *mōbad* predicted to Zāl that there would arise a mighty ruler by the name of Kay-Qubād, a prediction that was to be fulfilled.<sup>38</sup>

It seems to be taken for granted in the popular traditions of Iran that the *mōbads* were indeed often endowed with powers of predicting the future, of performing difficult healing operations, and of effecting miracles. There is no need to doubt that these stories reflect genuine Persian conceptions, and that they are not imported from a foreign source, especially as the Persian priests do not figure much in the Arabic sources as adepts in sorcery.

Informed foreign sources also speak quite clearly, and often without malice, of the reputation of the *mōbads* for supernatural powers. Thus, Xorenac‘i mentions a certain magus at the time of Artashēs, who was a *erazahan* ‘dream interpreter’.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *bi-farmūd tā mūbadān u radān/sitāra-šināsān u ham baxradān/šavand anjuman pīš-i taxti buland/zi-kār-i sipihrī pižūhiš kunand* (ShN 7:1401 f.)

<sup>37</sup> *biāmad yakī mūbad-i cāra-dast/mar ān māh-rux-rā ba-may kard mast* (ShN 7:1694).

<sup>38</sup> ShN 10:155.

<sup>39</sup> Russell 1987:296.



This goes well together with the ancient Greek view of the *magoi* as performers of extraordinary deeds.<sup>40</sup> An interpretation of the story of Gaumata the Magian in the Behistun inscription and in Herodotus in terms of this idea is quite appealing, although the argument tends to be circular, and it is difficult to decide what is less probable: the story as told by Darius, with its chain of unlikely events; or the inverted version of that story, reconstructed by modern scholarship, that makes 'Gaumata the Magian' the real Bardia, whom Darius killed, inventing as a cover-up the fantastic figure of the Magian masquerading as the legitimate ruler. Be it as it may, both possibilities are based on the assumption that a Magian can easily pose as someone else and get away with it for a substantial period of time.<sup>41</sup>

Were the ancient *magi* always priests, or were they merely members of a tribe from which priests were recruited? Mary Boyce<sup>42</sup> implies that the title *magus* always refers to priests. When it is found in the Elamite tablets to be applied to tradesmen, the assumption she prefers to make is that these were men of priestly families, who had chosen a secular calling. This theory, though not absurd, is somewhat contrived. Think of a man like Gaumata, where there is no hint of a priestly calling, or the statement of Herodotus about the *magi* being a Median tribe. Herodotus' words were dismissed by Boyce somewhat earlier, but taken together with the data of the Elamite tablets they make good sense. Assuming that there were many who were given the title *magus* merely because they were born into priestly families in any case undermines the assumption that this was a term reserved for priests. At any rate, the term had undeniable supernatural associations. In the Sasanian period, on which we concentrate our attention, the term had already long become

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<sup>40</sup> Averil Cameron (1969/70:95) says, 'for the [Greek] writers who really knew about Persia, the *Magi* were never more than priests', implying that they were not considered to be magicians. If we accept this point of view we shall have a hard time explaining a good deal of the indigenous Iranian material. For the Classical Greek views on the *magi* as magicians see Bidez and Cumont 1938 in several places, but particularly I:143 ff. On the supernatural power of the *Magi*, with a new attempt at an etymology, cf. Ito 1987, esp. pp. 12 ff.

<sup>41</sup> On 'the false Smerdis' see Gershevitch 1979; 1983. Gnoli 1974:148 f., n. 199; 1980:209, n. 49; 1989:93. The theory that the version of Darius has to be stood on its head has been revived by Bickerman and Tadmor 1978, following an earlier suggestion in the same direction by Olmstead 1948:92f., 107 f. Further discussions are by Nyberg 1938:375; Dandamaev 1976:108 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Boyce 1982:137.

synonymous with the Zoroastrian priesthood. Whatever the developments which made what looks originally like an ethnic group into a priestly class, the transformation must have been completed several centuries before the period with which we are concerned. But even in the Sasanian period the separation between a priestly specialization and public, judicial or administrative office is by no means clear-cut.<sup>43</sup>

We have other evidence for popular types of faith among Zoroastrians. The epic stories in Classical Persian contain a great wealth of material in which uncanonical mythological topics, partly imbued with strong magical elements, managed to survive the inevitable selection process in which learned priests, who felt themselves responsible for the preservation of the Zoroastrian canon of scriptures, may have taken part. We have in addition evidence from the neighbouring cultures of items of faith and practice that were not included in the official body of literature. The process of selection to which I have alluded is not like the hypothesis of an editing activity which according to some scholars caused the (alleged) Zurvanite elements to be expurgated from the religious literature. It was simply, I believe, a process of collection by which certain texts that seemed more appealing to the priestly compilers of the Pahlavi books were preserved, while others were neglected.

Astrology and divination by the stars are very widely attested in Sasanian Iran. The king consults astrologers in the story of the birth of Ardashir, the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardashīr ī Pābagān*, and the theme comes up again and again in the *Shāhnāme*. There is no doubt that this was very much part of everyday life, at least for important decisions. It was also part of the established religion. Evidence for astrological practices is found in the *Bundahishn*,<sup>44</sup> which represents one of the major channels by which official Zoroastrianism came down to us. Astrology was a serious matter for study and application, and hardly comes under the heading of popular religion. Applying oneself to it, and making use of its potential, required a considerable amount of learning and skill. There were no doubt also sham-professionals, as in every branch of

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<sup>43</sup> See Shaked 1990c.

<sup>44</sup> Henning 1942; Mackenzie 1964. Some of the astrologers at the court were Christians. Thus, when a successor to Acace the catholicos had to be chosen, the astrologer of King Zamasp (496–498), a Christian by the name of Mūsā (or Maswī?), asked his permission to choose a new one, and got it (*PO* 7:128 f.).

applied science, and there certainly was a popular version of pseudo-astrological lore, just as we have in Aramaic. Thus there exist treatises arranged by the days of the month, that give advice as to what is best to do and what should be avoided on each particular day. The idea of arranging such predictions according to the days of the month is no doubt inspired by astrology, where the association of the month with the cycle of the moon made sense. In Zoroastrianism, with its solar calendar, there is no connection between the calendar, in which the months constitute more or less arbitrary divisions of the year, and the lunar cycles.<sup>45</sup> This type of popular prediction literature may have first come into being in Babylonia, where the days of the lunar month had their astrological roots. From there it could have been borrowed by Jews, whose calendar, aiming at a compromise between the lunar and the solar principles, moves away slightly from this astrological basis, and by Zoroastrians, who rejected the lunar calendar in favour of a solar one. The fact that the prediction had lost its astrological sense did not bother the Pahlavi writers, who continued to cultivate this genre, obviously fascinated by the possibility of providing some secure knowledge of the future. The whole complex was eventually taken over by Muslim writers, either from Aramaic or from Pahlavi. There is every sign of a renewed wave of popularity which this literature enjoyed in Arabic (where making predictions by the days of the month again made some sense in the Muslim lunar calendar).

There are numerous instances of the use of magic practices in the *Shāhnāme*.<sup>46</sup> They seem to form an organic part of the traditional narrative as received and recorded by Firdowsi, and reflect most likely the perceptions and practices current in the Sasanian period.

Beyond these popular customs, and much more important from our present point of view, is the evidence for the worship of deities not mentioned in the official literature. It has been pointed out that Sāsān was not only the name of a person and of a dynasty, but also that of a deity,

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<sup>45</sup> For the Pahlavi treatise on the qualities of the days of the month, cf. *PhIT*, 69 ff., and Shaked 1978:103 f.; the text is rendered into Arabic in *Jāhiz Mahāsin*, 277. See also Shaked 1992a, where Aramaic compositions belonging to this genre of literature are discussed and partly published.

<sup>46</sup> Some instances: *ShN* 4:181, when the physicians try to cure Zāhhāk by means of a *nīrang*, a magical incantation; as Zāhhāk was a negative character, he is often associated with *jādūi*, the negative term for magic (*ShN* 5:4, 10, 168, 361). Farīdūn, a positive hero, receives instruction in good magic, *afsūngarī* (*ShN* 5:303 ff.). He indeed uses *afsūn* to his advantage (*ShN* 5:319).

with the former perhaps derived from the latter.<sup>47</sup> We have evidence from external sources for the worship of a deity by the name of Bagdana, a name which originally may have signified 'a temple', designating initially, one may assume, the name of the deity of a certain temple, and this may have become generalized. The name of this deity was borrowed by speakers of Aramaic in the Sasanian period, if not earlier, to designate a certain powerful demon.<sup>48</sup> There is, besides, evidence for the worship of mountains.<sup>49</sup>

In Syriac literature the Persian cult is normally equated with the worship of the Sun, the Moon and the elements.<sup>50</sup> A formula for the renunciation of Zoroastrianism was spoken by Mār Yūnān when he was tortured. The martyr says in his speech:

I do not believe in the sun, the moon, the fire and the water.

I do believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup>

Pērōz issued a decree calling on the Christians to regard the sun as god, and fire, water and stars as children of the deity.<sup>52</sup>

In another martyr's account we have notice of a denunciation of the Christians at the court of Shapur (apparently Shapur II). The text of the accusation makes them out to be people who sin against the religion of the king by not worshipping the sun, not purifying the air, and not straining the water.<sup>53</sup> The king addresses the martyrs saying:

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<sup>47</sup> Livshits 1977:174 ff. showed that this was a deity already worshipped in Parthia before the Sasanian period. See also Gignoux, in: Gignoux, Curiel and others 1979:73 f.; Gignoux 1986:156 f. For the etymology of the name, see MacKenzie 1986:114, who suggests, quite plausibly, that the name contains the element *sāna*- 'enemy'. One may compare to this the common royal name in Hatra and in Armenia, *Sanatruq* (see an enumeration of persons bearing this name in Justi 1895:282 f), which most probably also contains the same element. For an etymology in the sense of 'vanquishing the enemy', see van Esbroeck 1972:242, n. 8.

<sup>48</sup> See Shaked 1985.

<sup>49</sup> Russell 1987:104, n. 60.

<sup>50</sup> This has already been noticed by Asmussen 1961:11; 1983:937 f.; Gnoli 1989:166 f.

<sup>51</sup> Bedjan 1891:44.

<sup>52</sup> *Chr. Seert*, PO 7:101–102.

<sup>53</sup> Bedjan 1891:51 f. In the following pages of Bedjan, several other references to the Iranian faith are found.

Do you not know that I am of the seed of the gods, that I worship the sun and adore the fire? Who are you who stand against my order, and who abuse the sun, and treat fire with contempt?... What god is better than Ohrmazd? Which one is stronger in wrath than Ahreman? What sensible human being does not worship the sun?

The Christian martyr, whose name is also Shābūr, says, true to his faith, that he recognizes no god beside the one who created heaven and earth, the sun and the moon, as well as everything visible and invisible.<sup>54</sup> The last part of this statement clearly echoes the twin Persian notions of *gētiīg* and *mēnōg*, just as the king's words hint at the frightful demonic power of Wrath, the Iranian *Khēšm*. We are very much on Persian soil with these expressions; there is no point in dismissing some of these statements as inaccurate descriptions of the Persian faith of the period.

In some Syriac texts there are long lists of deities, the sense of which is not transparent. Shāpūr II commanded a general by the name of Maʿīn (or Maʿīn), an Arab by origin, to judge by his name, and a recent convert to Christianity, to worship the Sun, the Moon, Fire, Zeus, Bel, Nebo, and Nanai, 'the great goddess of the world'.<sup>55</sup> This list of deities to be worshipped need not necessarily reflect the personal religious preference of the king; it could possibly refer to the traditional form of worship of the Arab general, which the king would like him to preserve.

Such information as we have quoted (and there is much more) can hardly be explained as the result of misunderstanding or deliberate distortion. The relevant Syriac literature was composed in areas where a substantial part of the population was Persian, and where the current religion was Zoroastrianism. Mihr was of course identified with the Sun, and the worship of the sun could be understood as the worship of Mihr. But Mihr's position in Zoroastrianism is not so central that he would deserve to be placed at the top of the pantheon. Ohrmazd himself was also identified with the sun in various Iranian areas, especially in the eastern Iranian provinces, as may be deduced from linguistic

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<sup>54</sup> Bedjan 1891:53.

<sup>55</sup> See Hoffmann 1880:29, where the text is given in an abbreviated German translation. The Syriac text has apparently not yet been edited. A monograph on Maʿīn is in Fiey 1971. See further Christensen 1944:157; Chaumont 1985: 1009; Russell 1987:237 f.

evidence.<sup>56</sup> In West Iran, the area with which we are here mostly concerned, 'the sun' may be taken to be a reference to Mihr.

The religious reality of the Sasanian period was such that Mihr, identified with the sun, was indeed a central god in the western regions of the empire. One piece of somewhat circumstantial evidence for this is the designation of a fire temple by a term that implies dedication to Mithra. The post-Sasanian Zoroastrian term for a fire-temple is *dar-i mihr* 'the gate of Mihr',<sup>57</sup> which is surely a survival from the Sasanian period. In order to understand how this term could have come into being it is necessary to assume that the main worship in many temples was addressed to Mihr, not to Ohrmazd or to the Fire. This is corroborated by the fact that one of the general terms for a temple in Armenian was *mehean*, reflecting Iranian *\*mihriyān*, again derived from the name of this deity.<sup>58</sup>

Most traces of the Mihr worship, which, to judge by the Armenian evidence, must have existed from Parthian times, have disappeared. The fact that there was such worship dedicated specifically to Mihr in the fire-temples seems however irrefutable. If Mihr (Mithra) was a prominent Iranian god in the Parthian and Sasanian periods, and if his position was more pronounced in the popular religion than among the learned, the possibility that the Roman Mithras cult had its origins in Iran gains some weight, against the nearly unanimous scholarly opinion which tends now days to deny this.<sup>59</sup> The fact that it is difficult to find in the extant literature convincing Iranian parallels to several elements of the Mithraic myth in so far as it can be reconstructed from the monuments is no proof that they were not there.

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<sup>56</sup> The material for this was collected in Scott 1984:218.

<sup>57</sup> Russell 1987:272; Kotwal and Boyd (1991:3 and *passim*) translate this term 'Court of the Lord of Ritual'.

<sup>58</sup> Meillet 1920/21:233–234; Widengren 1965:186; Gershevitch 1975:87, who explains it from *\*Mithra-dāna-*; Hultgård 1982b:23; Russell 1987:264 f.

<sup>59</sup> The latest nail in the supposed coffin of the theory of Iranian origins to Roman Mithraism is provided by Ulansey (1991), who suggests that the Mithraic mysteries had their origin among stoicizing intellectuals in Tarsus in Cilicia. The impetus for the creation of these mysteries, and their inherent sense, according to Ulansey, was in the discovery of the new astronomical idea of the precession of the equinoxes. If one accepts this appealing theory, one may still wonder whether it really disposes once and for all with the Iranian connection, and whether the Iranian elements in the cult should be regarded as no more than a handful of exotic trimmings. That Mithraism was a Roman cult,

We can only manage to reconstruct a small portion of the variegated religious heritage of ancient Iran.

From various allusions in Pahlavi literature it may be deduced that Mihr was regarded as a judge and an eschatological figure. This role was expressed by the word 'mediator' (*miyāncīg* in Middle Persian), a term used also by Plutarch, though it was generally misunderstood.<sup>60</sup> Mihr also quite often appears at the head of a triad of deities consisting of Mihr, Anāhīd and Ohrmazd.<sup>61</sup> To this one may contrast the triad of deities sent by Ohrmazd to Wishtāsp in order to reveal the religion to him. These are Wahman, Ashawahisht and the Fire,<sup>62</sup> not any of the strongly anthropomorphic gods mentioned so far. In the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr Pābagān*, an epic romance of a late date, transmitted in Pahlavi, the following deities are mentioned: Ohrmazd, the Amahraspands, the Kayanian Khwarr, and the victorious Adur Gushnasp.<sup>63</sup> This selection of gods reflects good 'orthodox' Zoroastrianism, and places an emphasis on royal power, represented by the two last items, which stand for royalty and victory. Such contrasts between the lists bring out the differences between the established late Zoroastrianism of the Pahlavi books and the more fluid popular practice of the Sasanian period.

Among groups of gods worshipped we also have the so-called 'Zurvanite' tetrads of deities. One such group of four consists of Zeus, Chronos, Apollo, Bēdukh 'and the other gods'.<sup>64</sup>

Anāhitā, or as she was called in the Sasanian period, Anāhīd, is the only personal, anthropomorphic female divine figure in the classical Zoroastrian pantheon. She is a very prominent deity in the Sasanian

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and that it fulfilled a function in Roman society, is an admitted fact (see for example Momigliano 1975:148), but this does not contradict the possibility of a real connection with Iran. The Iranian heritage, it may be recalled, was quite strongly felt in Cilicia, and it is the essence of syncretism that it uses elements assimilated from various sources.

<sup>60</sup> A discussion is in Shaked 1980.

<sup>61</sup> This triad occurs in Armenia, where Mithra is sometimes replaced by Vahagn; cf. the instances quoted in Russell 1987:215, 244.

<sup>62</sup> *ātaxsh ī abzōnīg* (*Dk* VII 4:74, 78). In a late Parsee tale, recorded by Russell 1988:529, there occurs a triad consisting of Ardibihisht, Srōsh, and Bahrām, a reflection of a late Zoroastrian conception, in contrast to what we have of the Sasanian period.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Nöldeke 1879b:63.

<sup>64</sup> Hoffmann 1880:72. On these tetrads in general cf. Christensen 1944:157; Zaehner 1955.

period, a position she had also held under the Achaemenids and Parthians. She seems to enjoy prominent devotion both in court circles and among the common folk. For the kings she serves as the source of investiture.<sup>65</sup> She often occurs in the iconography, although one should be careful not to decide that all female figures in Sasanian iconography are representations of Anāhīd.<sup>66</sup> She may be represented as part of a tetrad of deities on an ossuary, where the deities are Mihr, Anāhīd, Zurvan and Ādur.<sup>67</sup> A worship of Anāhīd is mentioned by Tabarī as having taken place in the Sasanian period in *Istakhr*.<sup>68</sup> We also know from the inscriptions of Kirdēr that he established a fire of Anāhīd-Ardashīr and Anāhīd the Lady at Stakhr.<sup>69</sup> She was the object of various syncretistic identifications, with Artemis and Aphrodite,<sup>70</sup> but it does not seem likely that she formed part of a local game of identifications, such as with Armati, as was once suggested by de Menasce.<sup>71</sup>

Although she was integrated fairly early on into the Zoroastrian body of scriptures, Anāhīd stands out as an incongruous part of Zoroastrian worship, and in fact very little of the official priestly ritual of later times is directed towards her. Her prominence in Sasanian life seems to be in defiance of the canonical religion, as can be deduced from the fact that she sinks into a kind of oblivion once we have to rely mainly on the Pahlavi books for our information about what is the 'correct' Zoroastrian religion.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Under Narse, Boyce 1985:1005; photos of investiture scenes, see *EncIr* 1: 1010; Mosig-Walburg 1982:22 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Duchesne-Guillemin 1962:280 ff.; Göbl 1971:53 f.; Gnoli 1989:166 f.

<sup>67</sup> Ghirshman 1962:166. For Anāhīd and her role in the Sasanian period cf. Hoffmann 1880:72; Nöldeke 1879a:4, n. 2; Nyberg 1938:260 ff.; Wikander 1946:52 ff.; Chaumont 1958; 1965; Boyce 19750:95 f.

<sup>68</sup> Tabarī, *Ta'rikh* ed. de Goeje, 1:814, 819; ed. Ibrābīm, 2:38, 41; Nöldeke 18793: 4, n. 2, 17; Boyce 1985:1005.

<sup>69</sup> KKZ 8 and parallels; Back 1978:411; Boyce 1985:1005.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Cameron 1969/70:96, where references are given; Boyce 1985; and Chaumont 1985:1006. Further material on Anāhitā in various articles s.v. 'Aredvī Sūrā Anāhitā' in Colpe 1974/82:275 ff.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Menasce 1947.

<sup>72</sup> See further Boyce 1967 and 19773:249 ff. Anāhīd does seem to attract considerable popular attention even in the Islamic period. This can be deduced not only from the fact that her name is used as a component of female names (for which cf. Boyce 1985), although not to the extent that it lives on, for example,



A similar case could be made with regard to the figure of Wahrām, the god of victory. The evidence of proper names shows, in his case as with Anāhīd, his rising popularity in the Sasanian period, but there is evidence of a more direct kind too. His name was given to the highest fire in the religion,<sup>73</sup> and literary evidence shows that he was elevated by certain Zoroastrian circles at least to the position of a member of the exclusive club of the Amahraspands, the seven deities presiding over the whole pantheon. Typically for the adherents of a specific deity in a religion which recognizes several, he is spoken of as being the highest of them all.<sup>74</sup> In this act of piety the fans of Wahrām may not have noticed that they caused Ohrmazd himself to be ousted from this club, for he is often considered in 'orthodox' texts as the highest of the group of Amahraspands. It seems likely that the high position of Wahrām in these late and somewhat untypical Zoroastrian texts is not entirely an innovation. As with the other divine figures discussed, there is good reason to believe that there was an old tradition of Wahrām as a great fighting figure. Echoes of this are found in India and Armenia, and the special veneration accorded to him in the late Zoroastrian texts published by de Menasce belongs to the same tradition. We are only beginning to suspect, to paraphrase one of the conclusions of de Menasce, how far-reaching was the work of sifting and refinement which the *mōbeds* performed on their religious heritage, whose diversity and wealth are slowly being revealed to us by research and chance discovery.<sup>75</sup>

Were only male and female gods among the entities worshipped in Sasanian Iran, or was there possibly also demon-worship in existence among the population, despite the severe Zoroastrian condemnation of such a practice? The evidence for this is scanty. The prohibition of demon-worship was apparently taken very seriously. Perhaps not so

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among Armenians, but also from the fact that there is at least one literary survival of her myth in New Persian folk poetry. This is probably the case with the figure of Burāndukht, daughter of Ābān-dukht, in the *Dārābnāme* of Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad al-Ṭarsūsī, as has been shown by Hanaway 1982.

<sup>73</sup> Boyce 1982:222 ff. (see also Boyce 1968) would see the designation of the fire as reflecting the general noun for 'victory', unconnected to the name of the deity. The word 'victory' is however identical with the proper name of the deity, and the two are used interchangeably. The association of the two senses, far from being a late corruption of an original meaning, seems to be original.

<sup>74</sup> See Menasce 1948a.

<sup>75</sup> Menasce 1948a:18.

seriously as to prevent an attitude of at least apotropaic supplication towards demonic figures (for one would not like to make enemies for oneself among such potentially harmful entities), but at the same time it was taken seriously enough to avoid doing any acts addressed to the demons except possibly in private and under a veil of secrecy. There is hardly any explicit literary reference to the phenomenon, except in the Pahlavi writings, where demon-worship is strongly condemned. This could be either a continuation of an old theme,<sup>76</sup> which is apt to be repeated even when the actual reality behind it has vanished; but it could also serve as evidence for the existence of a practice that had not died away entirely. The fact that we have in Iran vestiges of a neutral connotation of certain demonic concepts, such as the term *dēv*, the figure of *Dīv-i sapīd*, 'the white demon',<sup>77</sup> and the figure of *Bushyast*, may go along with this hypothesis.

We also find representations of evil creatures commonly used on objects that had a semi-public function. Sasanian seals, widely used as emblems of office and perhaps as symbols of high status, carry, beside other figures, a whole repertory of animals that are among the most reprehensible beings on earth from the official Zoroastrian point of view: scorpions, serpents, lions, wolves, etc.<sup>78</sup>

We also have some evidence for the survival of demon-worship of some kind even in pious circles. Professor Boyce has supplied some such evidence in her observation of life in *Sharīfābād*, where the sacrifice of a black hen to the 'person beneath the earth' is practised.<sup>79</sup>

To give a brief summary of the material we have been discussing in the present lecture, it may be necessary to speak of three types of religion in Sasanian Zoroastrianism, in addition to the one that is familiar to us from the theological books in Pahlavi. We seem to have a hint of the existence of élite religious groups dedicated to a deeper,

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<sup>76</sup> We have reference to apotropaic rites addressed to the evil powers in Plutarch, *de Iside*, 46.

<sup>77</sup> The Sogdian proper names containing the element *dēw* e.g. *Dēwāštīc*, testify to the survival of a neutral, or indeed positive, connotation of this term at least in a certain region. Cf. Henning 1965a:253 f.; Livshits 1979a:166 f.; 1979b:60 f.

<sup>78</sup> Frogs are apparently never represented.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Boyce 19773:62; Russell 1987:438 f. This is reminiscent of the account of Plutarch, *de Iside*, 46, where offerings to *Areimanius* are mentioned. Cf. also *DkM* 182:6 ff.; 634:14; 893:10, quoted by Russell 1987:466, n. 18, who refers to Zaehner 1955.

more spiritualized religious conception; we have the popular type of religion, which is based on magic practices, and which probably accepts the need to propitiate the demons in order to avoid sickness and harm; and there is also a gray in-between area of what may be termed 'common' religious practice, which does not exactly tally with the theological Zoroastrian prescriptions, but at the same time does not constitute a grave deviation from or a direct clash with the tolerated standards of the priesthood. Adherents of all three types of cult may well have regarded themselves as good members of the Zoroastrian community. Certain purists might have frowned on some of these practices, but we have little evidence of an outright condemnation (except, of course, in the case of demon-worship, if that existed).

If the picture we are getting from these various details looks somewhat murky, this is due to the scrappy nature of the material. The main point of this presentation is that under the name of Zoroastrianism there was a fairly large range of cult and worship, which is hardly capable of systematic treatment. Some of this diversity lends itself to classification under the headings of 'higher' and 'lower' religion, although these terms are used with considerable reservation; other points, such as the excessively high position accorded to deities such as Mihr or Anāhīd, may belong to the distinction between the worship of the laity as opposed to that of priests. The picture is not unlike that of, say, medieval and modern Catholicism, with its variety of local and regional cults, most of which are tolerated within the fold of the church. The various aberrant cults of the Sasanian period may well have been accepted, even if uneasily, by the official priesthood. Conflict between official Zoroastrianism and these diverse cults may have arisen only sporadically, if ever.

Strict definition of the limits of orthodoxy and of what is to be excluded from it may have been achieved only in the post-Sasanian period. The opportunity for doing this offered itself, sadly, only when the religion no longer possessed temporal power, and much of the combined glory of kingdom and faith had gone. It was then that the priests had the stage entirely to themselves, imposing their code of a monolithic Zoroastrianism.

## V

# The Instruments of Religion

MUCH has been made in recent scholarly literature of the theory that the Sasanian kings were the initiators of a new idea of Iran, and that this was coupled with a conception of the connection between their patronage of the religion and the cohesion of the empire. The main proponent of this view is Gherardo Gnoli, who has developed it in a number of publications over the past years.<sup>1</sup> There is a great deal of truth in this, but one should try to keep a balance. We shall try to point out in the following a number of points which show this theory to be unsatisfactory, or at least incomplete.

It is best to start with the famous text at the beginning of the fourth book of the *Dēnkard*, which gives an idea of how the religious history of Iran was interpreted in priestly circles. It purports to be a history of the Zoroastrian transmission, but this is given from a very narrow angle.

[1] When King Wištasp was finished with the battle against Arjāsp, he sent to the lords a messenger and writings of the Mazdean religion, adorned with all knowledge, concerning many kinds of skills and learning and things of whatever (other matter),<sup>2</sup> in order (to make them) accept the religion. He sent with them a priest with well-trained tongue. Spēdag and Arjrāsp and others from outside Khwanirah came to Frašōštar to enquire about the religion, and he sent them (back) full of knowledge.

[2] Dārāy, son of Dārāy, commanded that the whole Avesta and Zand as received by Zoroaster from Ohrmazd—two copies of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gnoli 1971; 1984b; 1985; 1989. Cf. also Mosig-Walburg 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps to be read *būd ī ham-ce-kār*. Ito 1970:19 and n. 22 suggests *būd ī ham-iz kārē* in the sense of ‘historical events’.

(that) writing be preserved, one in the treasury of the (royal) quarters,<sup>3</sup> and one in the fortress of writings.<sup>4</sup>

[3] Walaxš son of Aršak commanded that a memorandum be sent to the provinces (to the effect) that they preserve the Avesta and Zand as they had come down in purity, and also the teachings that were derived from them; everything that had survived the damage and destruction of Alexander and the pillage and plundering of the Greeks, (all that) scattered in the Kingdom of Iran, whether in writing or orally, had been transmitted in the kingdom authoritatively.

[4] The late majesty King of Kings Ardašīr son of Pābag, on the righteous authority of Tōsar, expressed the wish that all that scattered teaching be brought to the court. Tōsar supervised (the work), accepting that which was certain, and leaving out of authority the rest. He further commanded: '(Come) hither to us! That will be (considered) the whole teaching of the Mazdean religion (concerning) which there is indeed now knowledge and information. There is no going down from that.'

[5] The King of Kings Shābūr son of Ardašīr, collected again the writings deriving from the religion<sup>5</sup> concerning medicine,

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<sup>3</sup> I propose to read this much-debated expression as it is written, namely, '*ganj ī šabīgān*, literally 'the treasury of the night-quarters'. The verse in Esther 6:1 may serve to illustrate the use which may have been made of important written records kept in the living-quarters of the king: 'On that night the king could not sleep and commanded the book of records of the chronicles to be brought, and they were read before the king.' This seems to imply that certain books were kept handy near the king's sleeping place, to be read out to him at his demand. I believe that the variant term *ganj ī xwadāyān* (*DkB* 341:20 f.) 'the treasure-house of the lords', i.e. the treasure kept at the house of the lords, would go well with this interpretation. In support of this suggestion one may refer to the representation of King Khusrau Anōsharwan on a Sasanian silver plate kept at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (illustrated in Orbeli and Trever 1936: pl. 2), where seven books seem to be piled up on the couch on the king's left hand, I owe this interpretation of the scene to A.B.Nikitin. For other recent interpretations cf. Boyce and Grenet 1991: 78, n. 38 (they accept the latest reading of Bailey 1971:xlīi f.); and Shaki 1981:115, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Presumably, the regular archives of the royal records. Humbach 1991, I: 51 translates, somewhat anachronistically, 'the National Archives'.

<sup>5</sup> For the expression *az dēn be* cf. Shaked 1980:21.

astronomy, movement, time, space, substance, accident,<sup>6</sup> becoming, decay, transformation, logic,<sup>7</sup> and other crafts and skills, which were dispersed among the Indians and the Greeks and other lands, and caused them to fit<sup>8</sup> the Avesta. Every correct copy he ordered to be deposited in the treasury of the (royal) quarters, and considered establishing every province (?)<sup>9</sup> upon (the principles of) the Mazdean religion.

[6] The King of Kings Shabur son of Hormizd caused, through disputation, all the inhabitants of the country to be without fault,<sup>10</sup> and brought all (theological) discussions<sup>11</sup> to deliberation and examination. After Adurbad won the case by seemly discourse<sup>12</sup> against all those sectarians, students of the *nasks*,<sup>13</sup> and heretics, he (the king) said: 'Now that we have seen the religion in existence,<sup>14</sup> we shall not let anyone (approach) evil religion. We shall exercise greater zeal (over this).' He (indeed) acted in this manner.

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<sup>6</sup> *jahišn*. Shaki 1981:116, n. 7, seems to me right in his explanation of this word.

<sup>7</sup> Thus, plausibly, Shaki. *gōwāgīh* could alternatively be an equivalent of Arabic *kalām*, which would then mean roughly 'theology'.

<sup>8</sup> *abāz handāxt*.

<sup>9</sup> It is proposed to connect *argistān* to the title *argabad* 'district commander', from *arg* 'castle'. Cf. Nöldeke 1879a:5; Szemerényi 1975: 367 ff. The connection made in Shaked 1974b:249, n. 117, would then have to be abandoned. Ito 1970:22 argues that this word means 'treasury', but I am not convinced that this is a compelling interpretation.

<sup>10</sup> I read this difficult passage *šābuhr...hāmag kišwarīgān pad paykārišnez anāhōg kard*. Shaki 1981:116, n. II, argues for his ingenious but unconvincing emendation *yazdān-āhang*.

<sup>11</sup> *gōwišn* is reminiscent of the Arabic *kalām*.

<sup>12</sup> This is a possible translation of *gōwišn ī passāxt*. *passāxt*, however, is often used in the sense of 'ordeal', and Adurbad is famous for having undergone an ordeal to prove the truth of his argument; it is therefore perhaps preferable to translate: 'by discourse and ordeal', reading *ud* instead of *ī*.

<sup>13</sup> Read *nask-ōšmurān*. The term probably denotes something close to *zandīg*, which literally means nothing more noxious than 'those who engage in *zand*', but which became specialized in a pejorative sense.

<sup>14</sup> *stī* means 'existence'; it is not a synonym of *gētīg*, as Shaki seems to take it. Humbach reads *gētīg*.

[7] His present majesty, the King of Kings Khusro son of Kawād, after he vanquished heresy, tyranny (and) great opposition,<sup>15</sup> greatly increased knowledge and detailed deliberation (in) the four estates concerning all heresy through the revelation of the religion. He also said this in the religious celebration of *gāh[ān] bār* (?).<sup>16</sup> ‘Know<sup>17</sup> the truth of the Mazdean religion. The wise can see it in the material world with confidence through deliberation.<sup>18</sup> It is possible (however) to become of supreme sanctity<sup>19</sup> and a foremost leader<sup>20</sup> essentially not by deliberation, but through the purity of thought, speech and action, (by) being kind to the good spirit,<sup>21</sup> and (by) worship of the gods in purity through the holy word. We definitely call those persons ‘*mōbads* of Ohrmazd’ who have made manifest to us the vision of *mēnōg*. We insistently request of them vision of *mēnōg* in an abundantly explicit manner,<sup>22</sup> as well as its *gētīg* measure (brought about) by manifestation, both these kinds in complete measure.<sup>23</sup> In addition, thanks be to the gods<sup>24</sup>; in particular for Iran,<sup>25</sup> [for] the kingdom of Iran has followed the teachings of the Mazdean religion, the perfect knowledge taught by the ancient sages to the whole of (the clime of) Khwanirah. With the wise there (can be)

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<sup>15</sup> Read [*ud*] *spurr-hamēstārīh*. *hamēstār* is a negative concept, and can hardly be used in an expression describing the king’s action.

<sup>16</sup> This is the only suggestion I can make for the reading of this difficult expression, written **g’hw’ldynyx** though I cannot claim to be satisfied with it.

<sup>17</sup> Read *dānēd*.

<sup>18</sup> Read: *hušyārān pad uskārišn ōstīg[ān]īhā towān (b’)* *pad gētīg dīd*.

<sup>19</sup> *abzōnīg* is the Pahlavi equivalent of Avestan *spenta*.

<sup>20</sup> This is *pēš-rad*, thus written in the manuscript (pace Shaki 1981:117, n. 20).

<sup>21</sup> *weh-mēnōg nāzišnīh*. An alternative reading, less satisfactory to my mind, is to read *weh-mēnōg wāzišnīh* ‘speaking by the good spirit’.

<sup>22</sup> Read *frāy-wizārīhā*.

<sup>23</sup> A discussion of this passage is in Grenet 1990b:92, n. 16.

<sup>24</sup> (**cyx**) *āzādīh-kardārīh ī yazdān*; the word before *āzādīh* is in all likelihood a failed attempt to write *āzādīh*, and should be ignored.

<sup>25</sup> I do not believe that there is a distinction here between ‘the Iranians’ and ‘Iran’, as claimed by Shaki.

no dispute over perversity,<sup>26</sup> so much having been preserved in the language of the Avesta by pure speech<sup>27</sup> and adorned writing in codices and treatises,<sup>28</sup> as well as in sermons and teachings<sup>29</sup> in a language in the manner of the common people.<sup>30</sup> Further, we have recognized all sources of knowledge of the Mazdean religion for this reason,<sup>31</sup> namely, that when any doubtful theories [in] the world, external to the Mazdean religion, reach this place, they are to be examined afresh. Theories alien to the Mazdean religion cannot bring so much acquisition and manifestation of knowledge for the benefit and relief of humanity as may be (reached) through abundance of investigation and deliberation in the learning of a *rad*. We decree with utmost desire that all (?)<sup>32</sup> priests<sup>33</sup> who are perceptive, most humble, of good character and good, should study the Avesta and Zand ceaselessly, ever afresh, and should add in a worthy manner from the comprehension of (the scriptures) to the knowledge of the people of the world. Those who say that human beings cannot attain, in the first place, to the knowledge of the Creator, to the marvels of the spiritual beings, and to the manner of the creation affected by the Creator, or else that they can attain to the whole of that, are (to be regarded) as men of little knowledge and as governed by lust. Those who say that the revelation of the religion can be known well through the analogy of reality, should be held to be thinkers; those who demonstrate clearly through knowledge, should be held to be religious sages.<sup>34</sup> And since the root of all knowledge is the

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<sup>26</sup> For the meaning of *juttarīh* cf. Shaked 1982a.

<sup>27</sup> I.e., oral transmission? thus Shaki.

<sup>28</sup> This is probably the distinction between *mādiyān ud ayādgar*.

<sup>29</sup> *gōwišn āgāhēnišn*.

<sup>30</sup> I.e., in the vernacular.

<sup>31</sup> Read: *ēd-ez rāy-mān šnākht ēstēd*.

<sup>32</sup> **KXDH**=*hammis(t)*, which has no apparent function here, may possibly be an error for *hamāg* 'all'.

<sup>33</sup> *mōmardān*, written defectively.

<sup>34</sup> I read this phrase as follows: *awēšān ke paydāgīh ī az dēn ēdōn weh pad-ez hangōšīdag [ī] ast[īh] šnāxtan šā[ya]stan guft pad uskārgar, ud hān ke rōšn nimūdan pad dānāgīh dēn-āgāhīh dāstan*.



religion, both by its *mēnōg* power and by its *gētīg* manifestation,<sup>35</sup> that man said wisely (the following): even when it does not hold any particular manifestation of the Avesta it ought to be regarded as a manifestation of the scriptures when someone brings to the children of the gods (?)<sup>36</sup> the religious duties by teaching.<sup>37</sup>

The history of the faith is here given from the point of view of the transmission of the scriptures. The Avesta and its vicissitudes serve in the double capacity of the bearer of the faith and of the symbol of its ups and downs, of its expansion and its shrinking. An interesting feature of this account, one that is repeated in other texts as well, is the underlying idea that the Avesta is a dispersed body of scripture, that has to be assembled from diverse sources. This is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the scriptures: they were scattered more than once, and collected again time after time. It makes no difference to the topic that the idea of a collection of dispersed scriptures is apparently used to justify the fact that writings borrowed from other cultures were incorporated into the canon. Once this image of the fate of the scriptures became part of the religious stock of ideas, it could be used in different ways.

The Jewish idea of exile applies properly only to the people, although it is sometimes used metaphorically also for the Torah, the body of the scriptures. In Iran we have a reversed situation. The notion of dispersion and exile is used with regard to the scriptures; it is the canon that has to be redeemed by being brought together again, not the people.

Another idea that contributes to this notion is that since the scripture embodies the ultimate summary of all wisdom, everything that can be recognized as the embodiment of wisdom, wherever it is found, is part of the scripture. This includes the latest achievements in the field of science, as we can see from the list of subjects discussed. The posture

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<sup>35</sup> Read *ham pad nērōg ī mēnōgīg ud ham pad +paydāgēnīdārīh [ī] gētīgīg*.

<sup>36</sup> I.e. humanity (?). The text reads here *yazdān zādagān*. Emending this to read *gēhān zādagān* does not seem to solve the problem, for we are not familiar with an expression 'children of the world' for humanity.

<sup>37</sup> *DkM* 412:3 ff.; *DkB* 511. Of the numerous treatments of this text the following may be mentioned: Nyberg 1938:415 ff.; 1958:17 f.; 1964:107–112; Bailey 1943:156 f., 218 f.; Zaehner 1955:31 f., 7 ff.; Widengren 1961:31 ff.; 1983:93, 95 ff.; Ito 1970:19 ff.; Boyce 1979:94, 103, 113, 118, 133; Shaki 1981; Humbach 1991, I:50 ff.

adopted is bold. The Avesta should include everything that is worthy of its lofty position, and there is no real pretence made to make it all part of the historical message of Zoroaster. There are of course analogies for this openness. Mani, also on Iranian soil, regarded himself as simply reiterating the message brought before him by a number of great prophets of the past, while purifying it from undesirable accretions and corruptions. He specifies Jesus, Buddha and Zoroaster. His canon is in intention also a collection of all that is true and important in the earlier religious revelations of humanity. And yet his message, and his position, is rather limited. It only recognizes one particular type of revelation, and rejects the rest. Here, in contrast, it seems that knowledge does not have to undergo an ideological test to be acceptable. It only has to be 'fitted' to the basic revelation. Philosophy, including Greek and Indian philosophy, is part of the revelation. We know, indeed, that Greek and Indian philosophical ideas were incorporated into Iranian thinking as it appears in the Pahlavi books.<sup>38</sup>

The text under discussion is based on the idea of a canon of wisdom that is made up of disparate elements which have to be combined. Pines drew attention to this expression and showed that it was apparently a common Iranian *topos* in the period of Khusrau Anošag-ruwān,<sup>39</sup> which was applied by the Christian philosopher Paul the Persian to the Aristotelian corpus of scriptures. This idea could be connected to the literary motif of the man who goes out on travels in search of wisdom, and whose travels take him wide afield, often as far as India. This is a widespread theme in Sasanian Iran; two persons around whom stories of this kind have been told are Wuzurgmihr, the famous Sasanian sage, who is said to have brought from India the game of chess, and Burzōy, a physician, who obtained the Pahlavi version of the Indian book

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<sup>38</sup> Bailey 1943; Shaki 1970; 1973; Shaked 1987a. This circumstance makes it harder to decide whether ideas known in Iran only from Pahlavi literature, such as the view of Man as a microcosm, already formed part of the Avesta, and if so whether they were Iranian ideas borrowed by the Greeks, as Götze 1923 claimed, or the other way round. See the remarks by Momigliano 1975:128 f., where further literature on the subject is quoted.

<sup>39</sup> Pines 1971 quotes a telling passage from Miskawayh's *Kitāb al-sa'āda* in which Paul the Persian, a philosopher in the court of Khusrau, speaks of the *Corpus aristotelicum* in similar terms. Wisdom was dispersed in the countryside and in the mountains, and Aristotle combined these dispersed parts of the philosophy and put them together in his corpus of writings. Compare also Pines 1990, where a comparison is made with Jewish expressions.

Panchatantra, which was later translated from Middle Persian into Arabic and became famous under the title of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.<sup>40</sup> These are people who went in search of wisdom, with the idea that wisdom is universal: wherever one finds it, it is suitable to be brought home, or, as one may put it in the language of this culture, to be brought 'back'.<sup>41</sup> Another genre of Zoroastrian literature where a similar topic comes up consists of the poems in praise of wisdom, where there are verses such as the following:

For much have I travelled in the world, much have I moved (in)  
region after region. Much have I enquired of the sacred word of  
the religion, much have I learned from scriptures and books.<sup>42</sup>

In some of these compositions, as in the writings of Paul the Persian, the typical outcome of the universal search for wisdom brings the traveller to the conclusion that it is difficult to know which of several conflicting versions of the truth is to be preferred. Another, more disturbing conclusion may be that there is no such thing as a single ultimate and irrefutable truth: the various formulations may all be relatively correct. Using the same language some writers come nevertheless to the conclusion that at the end of the journey there is clearly but one real truth, and that is the truth of their own faith. Even in those unambiguous formulations the starting point is the idea that it is common for people to be unable to make up their minds, and that there is a need to try different spiritual paths before reaching a final destination. One historical example for such a search was apparently Mani's father, Patik. Although he did not leave behind a composition telling of his wanderings in quest of truth, he seems to have tried more than one possibility before he settled in the Elchasaite community, where Mani grew up and which he later rejected.<sup>43</sup>

It is possible to connect the passage at the beginning of *Dēnkard* IV to this spiritual quest motif that has survived in relative abundance in

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<sup>40</sup> See the recent detailed study by de Blois (1990).

<sup>41</sup> The idea was evidently borrowed also by Islam. Cf. the well-known *ḥadīth*: *uṭlūbū l-ʿilma wa-law bi-l-ṣīr*, in: Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, 541 f., Nos. 1110–1111, and several other places (thanks to M.J.Kister for locating the reference).

<sup>42</sup> *PhlT* 165; cf. Shaked 1970b:400 f.; 1980:25. On this motif see Shaked 1984:58.

<sup>43</sup> Flügel 1862:49 f., 83 f.

the extant body of Sasanian literature. It is quite possible that Mazdak was another of those religious seekers. In a book attributed to King Khusrau I he says of himself that he studied the writings of his forefathers as well as those of the Greeks and Indians and that he made a selection from these writings.<sup>44</sup> Our passage from *Dēnkard* IV is another piece of writing from the secretarial office of King Khusrau. It testifies to the effort made to consolidate a canon that would be based not only on the transmitted Avesta, but also on knowledge and ideas borrowed from other cultures. It attributes the same tendency to previous rulers, and acknowledges any pious ideas that do not form part of the Avesta. One particular point is the emphasis placed on 'vision of *mēnōg*', as a means of knowledge and as a goal of spiritual quest.

Against the background of such a sceptical, open, attitude in religious matters, it does not seem likely that there was a strong sense of the need to define an orthodoxy which would constitute a rigid framework any departure from which would be branded as heresy. Two other religious communities existed in close proximity to Zoroastrianism, holding two different approaches to this question. One was Christianity, which, at least since the schism of the Nestorians in the fifth century, developed a sensitivity to the problem of the clash between orthodoxy versus heresy, each section of the church regarding the other as heretical. The Christians, from a certain period on, felt that it was important to know who are the true believers who should be strictly distinguished from those who deviated from the norm. Another religious group of the region, the Jews, seem to have had no such concern. It is true that there were occasional squabbles in the community, and that there were several competing schools of learning and interpretation of the scriptures. There may have also been vague reminiscences of more than one profound split in the community in the past, in the Second Temple Period. But that had taken place several centuries back, with no apparent survivals. It was also something that had occurred not on the soil of Babylonia or Iran, but in Palestine, and was part of a remote and somewhat inaccurate historical recollection. The Talmud has quite frequent and vague allusions to people called *minim* 'sectarians', who are most often identified by scholars as Judaeo-Christians or gnostics,<sup>45</sup> and who are

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<sup>44</sup> Shaked 1987a:217, n. 2, where Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, 205 ff., is quoted.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Urbach 1969, index s.v. (the index in Urbach 1979, s.v. heteronomy, gives only a partial listing); also Neusner 1966:25; 1968:12 ff.

usually not considered to be part of the Jewish community. In the reality of life in Babylonia no problem of community identity which could be caused by schismatic divisions is known to have existed.<sup>46</sup> The next real sectarian split within Judaism, and the only one that was to last, came about only in the early Muslim period, in the form of the Karaite crisis. In contrast to Christianity, Judaism of the period does not appear to have felt the need to develop the notion of an orthodoxy, or to set up defences against actual or expected heretical encroachments on its identity.

Of these two models of community structure, Zoroastrianism seems to be closer to the Jewish than to the Christian pattern. Several features, which distinguish Judaism from Christianity, are also shared by Zoroastrianism. It is true that Jews and Christians both constituted minority communities, with the Christians relying heavily on the Jews in the initial stages of the propagation of their religion,<sup>47</sup> and yet the ways of the two communities split apart fairly early on.

The Jews constituted an old-established religious community, which was in the final process of re-defining its way of life by codifying its laws and by creating and collecting a whole body of exegesis and interpretation which culminated in the Babylonian Talmud. The Jewish religion was strictly based on the notion of exegesis. Christianity, in contrast, was a religion in the making. The Christians were growing in terms of the number of adherents, they were undergoing persecution as a result of the incursions they were making into the fabric of the ruling Zoroastrian society, and they were seeking to define their proper identity as against the Jews and the Zoroastrians. For both Jews and

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<sup>46</sup> There have been attempts to discover traces of Jewish sectarians in the period preceding and following the beginning of Islam, but the material is so uninformative as to lead to no definite conclusions. Lately Gil 1992:19 f. has presented the view that there were Jewish Manichaeans, but there is little to support this contention.

<sup>47</sup> See for example Sachau 1915:30 f. In the legendary story of the martyrdom of 'Aqebshemā and his companions (Bedjan 1891:351–396), the *mōbad*, who wants to spare the lives of the Christians, suggests that they should drink blood; but they refuse; he suggests juice that looks like blood, and they refuse; he suggests meat, which they refuse although it is pure (i.e. not sacrificial; pp. 387 f.). This echoes Jewish scruples and a Jewish motif of martyrdom, e.g. in the Book of Maccabees, with Eleazar. This was noted by Peeters 1925:293. The Jewish elements in Ephrem have also been noticed. Pines 1989:113 maintains that the contacts between the Jews, or Jewish-Christians, and the Nestorians were particularly close.

Christians these were times of dynamic change and reshaping, but for one community it meant the final consolidation of several centuries of development, while for the other it meant defining the limits of a group that was constantly expanding by the recruitment of new members.

Sasanian Zoroastrianism was part of the intellectual world of its period. It shared many of the concerns of other systems of thought and religions having, at least from the time of Khusrau Anūsharwān, deliberately adopted some of the philosophical ideas current in the Greek philosophical schools. Zoroastrianism also shared with gnostics (including Manichaeism, a gnostic-type religion) and Christians some of their language. To give some examples, the symbolism of the garment as a representation of the self occurs almost as prominently in Zoroastrianism as it does in Christian and gnostic writings.<sup>48</sup> The use of a catechism based on questions such as: 'Who am I? Whence have I come?' is another feature that Zoroastrianism shares with the gnostics (and others who were influenced by them).<sup>49</sup> The use of the invocation 'By the name of the gods' is shared by Zoroastrianism with Judaism, Christianity, Mandaism, and the magic texts of the period.<sup>50</sup> The reference to 'treasures of good deeds collected in heaven', which is both a Jewish and a Zoroastrian (and possibly also a gnostic) motif, is another example for this shared repertory of notions.<sup>51</sup> There are some notions that are common more particularly to Jews and Zoroastrians. The idea of a 'fence' around the religion is found in both Zoroastrian and Jewish literature.<sup>52</sup> Certain themes common to Judaism and Zoroastrianism in the field of law can also be identified.<sup>53</sup>

The points on which Iran and gnosticism are in agreement cannot be used as an argument in the age-old debate as to the origins of gnosticism

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<sup>48</sup> For examples, see Williams 1990, II:173, n. 23:5. When Yima was summoned from hell, 'He was wearing clothes which were sinful' (*PRiv* 31a:4). Further material is in Widengren 1953.

<sup>49</sup> See above, Lecture 1. A comparable gnostic formula is given in Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 78; a translation will be found in Foerster 1972/74, I:230.

<sup>50</sup> See Shaked 1992c:152 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Urbach 1980.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Shaked 1979:272, on Dk VI 215; the Hebrew term is *seyag*.

<sup>53</sup> Some curious points of similarity between the legal terminology of Jews and Zoroastrians can be detected. One is the division of sins into two categories, which are labelled in Pahlavi *wināh ī ruwānīg* 'sins (committed

and its possible connections with Iran. At the late date in which much of the extant Iranian literature was composed, all that these correspondences show is that they both used a common stock of ideas and language.

It has been claimed that the Sasanian kings promoted the Zoroastrian religion as part of their national perception, in an attempt to consolidate their kingdom. This statement needs some qualification. What was promoted quite consistently by the Sasanian kings is the idea that there is an interdependence between royalty and the religion of the kingdom, a doctrine which could give them control over the religious tendencies of their time. As to the religion endorsed by the kings, there have been some fluctuations in the definition of that notion in the course of the period, and in any case there was little inclination on the part of the Sasanian kings to follow a devout Zoroastrian program of the 'official' type. They needed to have a firm grip on the chiefs of the religious communities, so as to be able to control the life of the people. The office of chief *mōbad* and chief *hērbad* in the court, which developed in the course of the Sasanian period, surely had as its main aim, from the point of view of the king, to tie the management of the religious affairs of the kingdom to the king's will. The holders of these posts, which were the highest in the church hierarchy, were obviously priests appointed by the king. From his point of view, the king was in charge of the religion, and some kings may have felt inclined to transfer their religious affiliation. The clearest case was that of Mazdak, which seems to have brought the king into serious conflict not only with the religious establishment but also with the nobility. It is possible that Mani's religion also stood a fair chance of winning the court and hence the kingdom. christianity made some headway high up in the administration, although apparently never in the heart of any of the kings, despite the fact that certain kings were known to have showed favour to the Christians.

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against) the soul', i.e. against religion, and *wināh ī hamēmārān* 'sins (committed against) associates', i.e. against other people. Cf. ŠnŠ 8:1. This is reminiscent of the Jewish division of sins into *עברות שבין אדם למקום* 'sins (pertaining to) man's relation to God' (the term for God expressed by a respectful allusion, literally 'the Place'), and *עברות שבין אדם לחברו* 'sins (pertaining to) the relation between one man and his associate'. On this point see Shaked 1990a:22, n. 18.

Whatever their religious feelings, if they had any deep sentiments in matters of religion,<sup>54</sup> the kings liked as a rule to have the heads of the various religions close to them and under their control. We know from some anecdotes in the Talmud that certain Jewish leaders were on terms of fairly close intimacy with the king of kings;<sup>55</sup> and we know from a number of chronicles that the kings often intervened in the selection of the head of the Christian church of the kingdom, and not infrequently managed to impose their choice on the Christians.<sup>56</sup> The heads of the religious communities were expected to accompany the king during his hunting and war expeditions, or at least to pray for his success in battle. Also, very typically, they were to serve as healers and physicians to the king.<sup>57</sup> This was required not only of Mani—the accusation that he did not fulfil this duty figures in the angry words that the king addresses to him—but also of the Christian catholicos. The king seems from time to time to have made other use of the head of the Christian community. We have a curious story of the catholicos under Yazdigird I. The king had lost a consignment of jewels and other valuables that had been

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<sup>54</sup> Widengren 1965:319 says that the Sasanian kings were not very Zoroastrian; cf. Gnoli 1989:165.

<sup>55</sup> A story told of Huna bar Nathan makes him stand in front of Yazdigird I (399–420), and the king touched his belt in order to correct its position. The story may of course be legendary (Bab. Talmud, *Zebahim* 19a; a discussion is in Beer 1970:46 f.).

<sup>56</sup> The catholicos *Aḥai* was put into his office ‘by the order of Yazdigird’ (*PO* 5:324); at Yazdigird’s insistence, Yahbalāhā was elected to be catholicos (*PO* 5:326); Ezekiel was elected patriarch according to the desire of Khusrau, against the opinion of many priests

(*PO* 7:192 f.); Hurmuz son of Khusrau convenes a special synod in order to overrule the election of a patriarch he does not favour and to see to it that the man he likes, *Išo’yahb* is elected (*PO* 13:438 f.); Bābay son of Hurmuz was elected by royal assent (*PO* 7:128 f.). These are just some of the instances in which the Christian chronicle admits that the head of the community was not necessarily the one preferred by the Christian priests but was placed over the community by royal intervention.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *PO* 5:327 f., where Yahbalāhā heals Yazdigird by his prayers. As catholicos, Ezekiel accompanied king Khusrau to *al-Jabal* (*PO* 7:193), and went with him on a military expedition. King Khusrau Abarwēz reprimanded the catholicos *Išo’yahb* for not having accompanied him on his military expedition (*PO* 13:440–442). A bad point for Mar Aba was that he refrained from accompanying King Khusrau I in war (*PO* 7:158 f.). On the relatively great number of Christian physicians in the court of Khusrau Anōšarwān, see *PO* 7:192 f.



brought by sea from India and China. The king's nephew had claimed that they had been taken away by robbers, but the king had his suspicions, and sent the catholicos to Persis to look after the matter and report.<sup>58</sup> This could not have been an isolated instance, for on several occasions the heads of the Christian community were sent on diplomatic missions abroad. Similar use was no doubt made by the king also of the chief Zoroastrian priests.

A common image for the need to have a proper balance between royalty and kingship was that of a throne, which needs to have all its four legs in order to be firmly established, or of the world that is supported by a column. This simile does not occur explicitly in Pahlavi, but it is assumed under the expression *stun* 'the supporting column (of the world)' which is royalty.<sup>59</sup> In one context this image occurs as a parable for the need to hold the various religious communities in proper balance.

A Christian chronicle recounts that king Hormizd-dād (Hormizd IV, 579–590) was favourably inclined towards the Christians. When the Zoroastrian priests (*majūs*) complained to him about that, he replied as follows: 'A throne has four legs, and the two inner ones cannot support it without the two outer ones. The religion of the Magians likewise cannot stand without opposition.'<sup>60</sup> Take great heed and care not to go against what I have ordered.'<sup>61</sup> In the wording of the king's speech there are echoes of what sounds like genuine Middle Persian expressions. The Arabic word translated here by 'opposition' (or: 'an antagonist', *maqāwim*) strikes us as somewhat bizarre, since a throne hardly needs antagonism in order to be stable. This word may, however, be a rendering of Middle Persian *hamēmār*, which is ambiguous: it designates both 'associate' and 'antagonist', with the negative meaning

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<sup>58</sup> *PO* 5:324 f.

<sup>59</sup> See the quotations in Shaked 1984:40, n. 43. A similar image occurs in the Babylonian Talmud (*Berakhot* 32a), where it is said that Israel is like a three-legged stool, with its three Patriarchs.

<sup>60</sup> Arab. *muqāwim*, lit. 'someone who rises against, an antagonist'.

<sup>61</sup> *Chron. Seert*, *PO* 7:196. In the translation I have omitted some repetitions.

gaining the upper hand in the later period.<sup>62</sup> The king's words may thus have properly meant: 'The religion of the Magians likewise cannot stand without a counterpart (or associate).'

The idea that society needed to have proper balance was important to the royal way of thinking. It is surprising to find it applied to religious divisions in a society which expects the king to be a defender of the established religion. The historical attribution of the notice may indeed be suspect, but not its Sasanian flavour: for it is entirely in line with Sasanian thinking to use this kind of simile, whether we judge it to have been used in this form by the king, or fabricated by the Christian community of the period in order to claim legitimacy to their demand to be treated on a par with Mazdaism.

Royal interference in religious matters is an expression not so much of interest in religion as of interest in holding the populace in tight control. The king's involvement in the affairs of the Zoroastrian church is not much deeper than in those of the other religious communities of the kingdom. The kings did not hesitate to refer to themselves as coming 'from the seed of the gods',<sup>63</sup> or to expect to be addressed in Middle Persian by the epithet *bay* (Parthian *bagh*),<sup>64</sup> which is borrowed from the form of address to the gods. The claim of coming 'from the gods' is a statement which applies, from the Zoroastrian point of view, with a measure of accuracy, to every human being. We may take it that the kings applied this phrase to themselves not in this pious Zoroastrian sense but as denoting that they were on a scale higher than that of the rest of humanity. The rhetoric of the interdependence of royalty and kingdom came readily to their lips, and it comes up again and again in the reported investiture speeches of the Sasanian kings and in the

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<sup>62</sup> For a discussion see Shaked 1990a:22, n. 16. An occurrence of *hamēmāl* 'opponent' in New Persian was noted by Tafazzoli 1975:27. For the semantics cf. Pth **'mb'g** 'partner, associate; rival, enemy' (*MirMan* III), and NP *hamtā* (see Rajāi [n.d.]:31), which has a similar ambiguity. One of the expressions for 'to take care, beware' in this passage is *unzurn*, which seems like a translation of Middle Persian *nigarēd*; the Arabic verb is not normally used in the sense of 'beware'.

<sup>63</sup> **MNW ctry MN yzt'n** The corresponding Armenian and Syriac formulae are discussed by Gray 1949:370, n. 3; see also Russell 1987:148, n. 75. The Sasanian king Shapur II is reported to have referred to himself in a letter to Emperor Constantius as *particeps siderum, frater solis et lunae* (Ammianus Marcellinus 17, 5:3). A full discussion is in Gnoli 1989:168.

<sup>64</sup> Bibliography in Gnoli 1989:168.

testaments attributed to them. None of this literary material needs to be genuine in the sense that it was actually said by the king on the occasion stated; but most of it seems genuine in a different sense, namely, that it is derived from a Sasanian or early post-Sasanian composition that retains the basic thought and approach of the Sasanian kings, and conveys a perception and a language which the kings and the court were wont to use on solemn occasions.<sup>65</sup>

The notion, propagated by the Sasanian kings, that religion and kingship are complementary notions may be responsible for giving them in the eyes of Greek philosophers in the west the image of having brought together philosophy and government, thus realizing the Platonic dream of the philosopher-king.<sup>66</sup> As a result of this the court of the Sasanian king served for some time as a shelter for a group of Greek philosophers who were forced to flee from their home. These are the words used by Agathias:

...Damascius the Syrian, Simplicius the Cilician, Eulamius the Phrygian, Priscianus of Lydia, Hermias and Diogenes from Phoenicia, and Isidore of Gaza, all of these, the very flower (to use a poetic term) of the philosophers of our time, because they did not share the view of God prevailing among the Romans and thought that the Persian state was far better—they were persuaded by the very widespread tale that the Persian government was supremely just, the union of philosophy and kingship as in the writing of Plato, and the people disciplined and orderly, that there are no thieves or robbers among them, nor do they practise any other sort of crime, and that even if some precious object is left in a lonely place, no one who comes by will steal it, so that it remains safe, even if it is unguarded, for the man who left it there to return.

This episode takes place at the times of Khusrau I of Immortal Soul, the king who managed to impress the world with his wisdom, and it may perhaps be credited to his personal image that this propaganda was so effective. The tale ends in disappointment. The philosophers discover that the Iranian kingdom is not an ideal state, and that King Khusrau is

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<sup>65</sup> Goldziher 1900:125 was probably the first to notice this borrowing from pre-Islamic Iran into Islamic civilization. On the numismatic material in this connection cf. MosigWalburg 1982:28 f.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Agathias II, 30:3; Cameron 1969/70:166–169.

not a philosopher, 'with not even an acquaintance with the subtleties' of philosophy, and ultimately take advantage of the peace treaty between the Romans and the Persians to return home. This is not only a story of mistaken perceptions about a foreign and distant country, or of the homesickness of the all-too-human philosophers. The hankering of the philosophers for a strong king who would be sympathetic to philosophical ideas, mixed with the hope that a non-Christian country may be open to the pagan ideal of justice, gives special poignancy to this story of hope and disappointment. The hope was possibly nurtured by the equation of the idea of a philosopherking with the public-relations image of a state built on the twin pillars of religion and kingship.

The Zoroastrian priests had their own interest in fostering good relations with the court, and in wishing to develop this ideology of the interdependence of royalty and religion. The favour of the court was essential to the very existence of a religious organization. It hardly needs stressing that by receiving honours and status (that always went together with handsome material benefits) the priests became the willing associates of the court and had an interest in promoting the royal ideology. Status at the court also afforded them considerable power to pursue what seemed to them genuine religious interests: to bolster up their type of religion against the others, to fight the encroachments made on Zoroastrianism by members of the more militant missionary groups, and to instil a greater sense of community in the hearts and minds of the population. To this extent there was a great deal of common interest between the priesthood and the king. This applies also, with the necessary adjustments due to the difference in status, to leaders of the other religious communities in the kingdom.

We may well imagine that the conception of an Iranian entity, which comprised both people and religion, which, as Gnoli has tried to show,<sup>67</sup> is very likely a product of the Sasanian period, was developed in parallel fashion by both the king and the priesthood, each of the two parties pursuing its own aim. The aims went together for the most part without serious clashes. At the same time there are hints of a strain within the body of the clergy. There are indications that court priests were criticized by rural priests who may have belonged to the *élite* type of religion (to use the terminology suggested above), the type of religion that fostered a more spiritual approach to religious matters. This

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<sup>67</sup> Gnoli 1989.

criticism was directed at priests who indulged in the luxuries of power and the good life. Two such priests went to the court, we are told, in order to attend to some business, but half-way there they had second thoughts. They had just tasted some greens in the field and had drunk some water, and realized that this simple food and drink was more salubrious, materially and spiritually, than the delicacies of Ferēd at the court. In another story in the same vein, a priest is invited to the court of the high priest to be given a mark of religious distinction, but refuses to accept any monetary reward beyond a paltry sum, because that is all he needs. More than that, we are given to understand, would be corrupting.<sup>68</sup> These are but scanty indications, but they seem to suggest that there were within the priesthood elements critical of the good life enjoyed by the priests at the court and suspicious of the purity of their motives. From what we know of priests in other cultures, such suspicions may have been well founded.

The main vehicle used by all those who made any claim for religious leadership, whether priests or impostors, whether 'orthodox' or heretical, was, as we have already noted, the scriptures, which in the case of Zoroastrians consisted of the Avesta and the *zand*. These two notions are unfortunately far from clear. Do we talk of two sets of books? Do we talk of a book and a body of oral lore? Or should we rather talk of two sets of oral traditions?

There have been several attempts to solve the problems mentioned, and we cannot hope to offer a definitive answer to these questions. On the basis of the known material, which is somewhat contradictory in nature,<sup>69</sup> I tend to believe that even if the Avesta existed as a written book towards the end of the Sasanian period<sup>70</sup>—and it is very likely that it did, in view of the fact that a method of writing did exist, and that the neighbouring cultures offered models of sacred books that were used as books—its existence as a book did not make much difference to the fact that it was studied, recited and quoted not as a written book but as a sacred oral text. There is nothing remarkable about such a situation. The

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<sup>68</sup> *Dk* VI D<sub>2</sub>–D<sub>3</sub>. A new, to me not quite convincing, interpretation of D<sub>3</sub> is given by Shaki (1990).

<sup>69</sup> There are indications for the Avesta being called 'a book' in the Sasanian period, and yet there are strong arguments to show that it was not used as a book.

<sup>70</sup> This agrees with the reconstruction of Hoffmann 1970:188 f., according to which the text of the Avesta was fixed in the fourth century, approximately under Shāpūr II; see a survey of the questions by Kellens 1987a:36.

scripture may have indeed been collected, edited, and set into writing some time in the middle of the Sasanian period or towards its end, say at the time of Khusrau I (as suggested by Nyberg<sup>71</sup>), and yet it almost certainly did not enter into use as a written text until considerably later. Tradition dies hard in such matters. If the conception was that the only way to study the sacred text is by memorizing and oral recitation, it would have made little difference if a written copy existed in the royal treasury or in a temple. The real test of one's knowledge of the text and of its ritual efficacy was by being able to recite it from memory in the prescribed manner. Some of the best analogies for this state of affairs are still with us: the *Qur'ān* is a written book, and the Islamic religion has prided itself right from its inception on possessing such a book. And yet the traditional study of the *Qur'ān*, even today, is done by committing it to memory and by reciting it aloud. A similar situation exists in India, where the study and recitation of the Vedas are done not from a written book but orally. The difference between the Sasanian Avesta and the two analogical examples from the modern world is that in the case of Islam and India it is always possible nowadays to verify a point by looking up a printed text; in Sasanian Iran the text was inaccessible to most people. Add to this the fact that its study was restricted, as was also knowledge of the system of writing by which it was recorded, and it is clear that the debate as to the writing of the Avesta has little practical meaning. It was essentially an oral scripture, despite the paradox involved in this expression. By contrast, the Old Testament to the Jews, the Bible to the Christians, and the Manichaean canon to adherents of Manichaeism, were books in the full sense of the term.

As for the *zand*, there was not even a hint of a desire to put it in writing, and the limitations on teaching it were stricter than with regard to the Avesta.<sup>72</sup> It fell into the same category as Oral Law, the Jewish *Tora šebbe-'al-pe*, that was being developed and formed within the orbit of Sasanian culture in Babylonia. It was oral by definition, by deliberate choice, and there was a whole body of lore to justify and bolster this choice. 'Oral Law should not be committed to writing', was a commonly quoted adage of the Jewish Sages. Eventually it was; there was no escaping that, for the corpus grew in size to such proportions that it

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<sup>71</sup> Nyberg 1938:415.

<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to note that in AVN 2:32, 35 the *dastwars* are said to recite the Avesta and the *Zand*, while the sisters of Ardā Wirāz only say the Avesta, presumably because they were not taught the *zand*.

could hardly be held in memory. Even before it was committed to writing each transmitter had to specialize only in a single portion of the text, which he would be able to memorize properly. An added consideration was the situation of diaspora. It was becoming impossible to preserve such a vast corpus when the schools of learning were established at great distance from the centre, and when the creation of additional centres was compounding the dispersion. The need was clearly felt to break the rule in order to preserve the Law. The Iranian analogies are quite striking, although in the case of Iran we have no information as to the identity of the people who made the bold decision to commit the oral teachings of scriptural exegesis to writing, or of the precise time. The analogy fits even down to some telling details, as was shown by Shlomo Pines. The idea of a scattered body of scripture that had to be collected and brought together exists in both Iran and Israel,<sup>73</sup> and so also does the notion that each *mōbadh* knew only one of the 23 nasks of the Avesta. This last point is also attested independently in the Pahlavi books.

There is an evident distinction between Avesta and Zand, the one being the sacred text and the other a combination of translation and commentary to that text. Zand being an ambiguous term, and one felt to possess such ambiguity, a third term seems to have been introduced to distinguish between the two basic senses of *zand*. The new term is *pāzand*, which is considered to denote the commentary, as opposed to *zand*, which, in its narrower sense would refer only to the Middle Persian version of the sacred text. We have evidence for this distinction from the Arabic sources, and it is again the merit of Pines to have shown that a similar distinction between seemingly synonymous terms existed also in Jewish writings, the Judaeo-Arabic terms *šarḥ* and *tafsīr*.<sup>74</sup> Contrary to Jewish usage, however, *zand* was inextricably entwined with the text of the Avesta in study and recitation, so much so that the two terms became merged together to form one compound fairly early on in the Middle Ages. This is quite clearly visible in the use Firdowsi makes of the combination *ust u zand* or *zand u ust*. Being amorphous and quite pliable, the resultant text was capable of change through amplification and excision, and it is this free-flowing character that constituted the greatest danger inherent in it in the eyes of the clergy. The *zand* could be easily twisted and changed to suit different

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Pines 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Pines 1990, n.16 Cf. also Shaked 1969:188.

attitudes and points of view. This seems to have happened occasionally, making it difficult for the priests to keep it under check.

Only some considerable time after the Islamic conquest of Iran were the various *zand* compilations written down. They sometimes present different school views on minor points, as we have seen, but by that time a central and more or less unified interpretation had prevailed, causing virtually all other major divergencies to disappear. The *zand* that has reached us is thus the outcome not of a planned effort at editing and excluding certain materials, but of a well-intentioned activity of one or more groups of people in the ninth and tenth centuries, who sought to preserve what was in their opinion worthy of survival. In the nature of things, that was a very narrow and one-sided selection of *zand* material.

The view put forward by Geo Widengren,<sup>75</sup> according to which a large-scale editorial project was under way at the time of Khusrau I, during which the Zurvanite elements were cut out of the canon of *zand*, and only orthodox material was allowed to stay, strikes me as contrived. The censorship process assumed by Widengren was crude enough to allow several Zurvanite themes to escape the scissors of the editor-cum-censor, thus making it possible for the modern researcher to reconstruct an impressive Zurvanite edifice. I find this position unconvincing. I do not think it plausible that any *zand* existed in any written form during the Sasanian period, and it is not likely that the supposed anti-Zurvanite censorship of Khusrau could operate on oral transmission. The very existence of a Zurvanite body of doctrines, let alone writings, is questionable, and Khusrau surely had his hands full dealing with the problems and disruptions caused by the real dissenting movement of the period, Mazdakism, to have any time left for the Zurvanites, whose very existence as an organized heresy is in need of evidence.

Apart from Mazdakism, to which we shall come back presently, there is another dissenting form of Zoroastrianism which has the status of 'heresy' in the eyes of the compilers of the Pahlavi books. That is the school of a certain teacher called Sēn, whose teachings are often condemned.<sup>76</sup> It would be interesting to try and reconstruct the views of this heretic from the scattered pieces of polemic directed against him, but this cannot be undertaken here.

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Widengren 1983:97 ff., where references to earlier works by the same author will be found.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. *Shāyast ne Shāyast* 6:7.



Another instrument of the religion is practice and ritual. It is significant that we have next to no information about variations in ritual according to sectarian lines, except as regards the Mazdakites, where there is a great deal of talk about sexual prescriptions, but not much about other aspects of the religious life. I shall confine myself to some brief comments on the sexual commandments.

One of the few things in Zoroastrian ritual that is difficult for us, and even for our Zoroastrian contemporaries, to explain, is the practice of next-of-kin marriages, or *xwēdōdah*. The subject has given rise to a considerable body of literature, both denying and asserting its existence, both mocking and heaping abuse on its practitioners, and defiantly upholding it. The taboo on incest has been declared by modern psychologists and sociologists to be a universal trait of human societies, and perhaps the most typical hallmark of socialization achieved by humans.<sup>77</sup>

It seems to be an established fact that *xwēdōdah* was practised by the Sasanian kings.<sup>78</sup> The practice is very highly praised in the Pahlavi books. It is said to be not only one of the three highest acts of merit, but the most effective of them all. There are things that the devil can do against other good deeds, but there is nothing he can do against this one.<sup>79</sup> Ahreman speaks to his chief assistant, the spirit of Wrath, Xešm:

Leave *xwēdōdah* alone, for neither you nor I know a remedy for it.  
For when they copulate four times, the man and the woman will  
never depart from the kinship of Ohrmazd.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The two foremost theorists of the psychoanalytical and anthropological disciplines who have expressed themselves on this issue are Freud in his *Totem and Taboo* (see Freud 1938:807 ff) and Lévi-Strauss in his work on kinship systems (see 1969:12 ff).

<sup>78</sup> Mosig-Walburg 1982:57 f; with a reference to Menasce 1956:6 f.

<sup>79</sup> *PRiv* 56:15 f. Cf. also *PRiv* ch. 8, and Williams 1990, II:126 ff.

<sup>80</sup> *PRiv* 56:16.

Reflections of the Iranian notion of *xwēdōdah* exist in Arabic<sup>81</sup> and Syriac<sup>82</sup> literature.

One line of defence adopted by modern scholars for this embarrassing practice was to explain it as a reminiscence of an ancient period of hardship.

It seems just conceivable that at an early and struggling stage of its history (...) the Zoroastrian community, while earnestly promoting marriage between the faithful, found itself, because of its small numbers, solemnizing unions between the immediate family,

is how one scholar apologetically accounts for the next-of-kin marriage.<sup>83</sup> This hardly justifies the very forceful language which was used to promote this type of marriage, coaxing people into it and promising them the highest rewards a religion can bestow on its believers. According to another explanation offered and recently endorsed, the Sasanian practice of next-of-kin marriage had as its aim to protect the religion from foreign beliefs through true racial segregation. It was, according to this explanation, a national as well as a religious means of preservation. The analogy for this would be the Jewish condemnation of mixed marriages.<sup>84</sup> The weakness of this explanation lies in the fact that the prescription of next-of-kin marriages was instituted, as far as we can tell, well before the Sasanian period, and that, unlike the Jewish precept, it is formulated not in negative terms: do not marry outside your family, or clan, or people, as is the language used in the Jewish writings, but in positive terms: the highest virtue is to marry one's mother, sister, or daughter. There is, for example, a decree issued by king Yazdigird II to the Armenians, which includes a demand for daughters, mothers and sisters to marry their fathers, sons, and

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<sup>81</sup> One telling example is in the Islamic legends pertaining to the first human couple and their offspring; cf. Kister 1988:113.

<sup>82</sup> Cain killed Abel because he was forced to exchange twin sisters with him, to avoid incest, but was jealous for his own twin sister, Labūda, cf. Bezold 1883/8, II:34–36. See also Bezold op.cit., I:140–142.

<sup>83</sup> Boyce 1982:75 f.

<sup>84</sup> Menasce 1956:7; endorsed by Gnoli 1989:172.

brothers.<sup>85</sup> This kind of demand goes well beyond what may be plausibly described as the defence of Iranian purity of blood. But the most important objection to this explanation is the simple fact that Zoroastrianism, unlike Judaism, was not a religion on the defensive. It was the state religion, commanding the large population of a vast empire in the early Sasanian period, and whatever it may have lacked in internal cohesion it certainly did not lack in numbers.

It may be argued that this, like most other religious practices, does not require an 'explanation', and that the alleged universal taboo on consanguine marriage is simply a scholarly invention. Still, because of the rarity of the phenomenon, and because of the great stress placed on it by the Sasanian authors, it would be useful to have a way of understanding why it was considered to be such a meritorious deed from the Zoroastrian point of view. One way of approaching the problem is by seeing its affinity with other societies where it was practised. Luckily, the work of collecting the material has been done for us by Frenschkowski.<sup>86</sup> The custom seems sporadically attested in royal and noble circles, and it may have been an extension of such an idea of nobility in Iran, encompassing eventually the whole community. There have been suggestions that in Iran itself the custom never became truly universal, and that in practice it was mostly confined to the circles of the nobility and the very pious.<sup>87</sup> We have no way of checking on that. In the Sasanian period this seems to be a widely attested practice, although perhaps not followed as frequently as the clergy would have liked, judging by the amount of rhetoric used in order to encourage more people to fulfil this religious duty.

There is an interesting point here. Both Freud and Lévi-Strauss have assumed that civilized human society learned to treat incest marriage with abhorrence in order to overcome a certain inherent urge that people are supposed to feel towards it. For Freud it was the psychological urge to possess one's mother (although this does not explain the other types of incest), and for the dominant male in the imaginary primordial human group to possess all females in the group; for Lévi-Strauss it is the possessive urge of a family group to keep its women to itself. According to each one of these explanations the natural urge towards close endogamy had to be overcome in order to establish society as we know

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Russell 1987:492 f., quoting Eliše.

<sup>86</sup> Frenschkowski 1990:218 ff.

<sup>87</sup> Darmesteter 1892/93, I:134.

it, with the hold of the chief male in the family group over the women under his control declared illegal and shameful, thus making it possible for women to be shared by all. The trouble with these explanations is that their basic assumption, that of a strong urge to possess by preference the women of one's own family, fails the empirical test that offers itself here. We have in Sasanian Iran a society that not only allows such a possession, but praises it as the mark of the highest virtue. Surprisingly, there seems to be no rush towards fulfilling this duty, which supposedly represents the deep desire of every male, suppressed though it may be under layers of civilization. The testimony of other societies of antiquity is perhaps less decisive, but there certainly were several societies that condoned marriages between first-degree relatives: the Egyptians and the Elamites seem to belong to those.<sup>88</sup>

It seems clear that whatever their merits, these can be no more than partial explanations for the phenomenon of the incest taboo. The rejection of incest by most human societies seems to reflect an uneasy feeling about it; it seems to reveal not only a common attraction underlying the incest situation (for otherwise there would be no need to place it under a taboo), but also a widespread revulsion from it. It may be true, psychologically, that the attraction of incest is almost a universal phenomenon at one phase of individual development, not only in a son-mother relationship, as Freud would have it, but also in the relationship of brother and sister, father and daughter. There is perhaps a lesson to be learned from this. If there are feelings that are inherently ambivalent, this seems to be a good example of their existence. Whether society forbids or encourages sexual union within the close family, an urge in the opposite direction makes itself felt. One must assume that it is equally common to have an aversion to a relationship within a small agnatic group. The situation of a close-knit community where children grow up together, as in a modern Israeli *kibbutz*, makes it likely that in some cases the two aspects of this complex—attraction and revulsion—are transferred to members of the opposite sex with whom one grew up even though one is not related to them by blood ties.<sup>89</sup> Without wishing

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Allam 1975; 1977. For the Elamites, König 1957–1971. Eduard Meyer 1913:23 ff., speaks against imposing the prejudices of our own society on antique civilizations, and underlines the frequency with which next-of-kin marriages are encountered in various periods and cultures. For a survey of the anthropological data and discussions cf. Mead 1968.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Spiro 1965:333 ff., 347 ff.

to offer a new explanation, one should note that the Zoroastrian precept of *xwēdōdah* lends little support to existing theories about the incest problem.

Why did the practice of *xwēdōdah* become such an important issue for Zoroastrians in the Sasanian period? We can only take their word for it. *Xwēdōdah* was made to be a symbol for the cohesion of society, for the harmony which is affected by the union of father and daughter, son and mother, a harmony which has its counterpart in the cosmic order, in the relationship of sky and earth, of the bounty coming from above in exchange for obedience and pious submission from below. Other symbols may have been chosen, and some other symbols were in fact used to convey similar ideas (for example, the *kustīg*), but this was considered to be one of the best ways of symbolically indicating the kind of universal harmony which helps the cosmos keep its pristine structure. The insistence on pure descent is also part of this story. Not necessarily pure Iranian descent, although this is tied up with the idea of a clear line of descent, but the continued existence of a clear line of family, unadulterated by outside blood.<sup>90</sup> This, I am afraid, is not a clever historical explanation for the practice; but it is the explanation that the Zoroastrians would have given, and I see no reason to reject it as irrelevant. In a way, as with the notion of dualism, the very opposition that it aroused among adherents of other religions made it all the more a symbol of Zoroastrian uniqueness and distinctness. In a previous period, the choice of Ahura and the rejection of the Daēvas seems to have been a decision motivated partly by a desire to create a visible barrier between the followers of Mazdā and those of the *daēvas*.

This explanation assumes that social customs often operate in a religion in the same way as linguistic signs do in language, that is to say, they get their sense from the whole system, among other things from their opposition to certain other customs, and they need not always be explained by their functional usefulness. They do not necessarily have a heavy load of significance in themselves, but can be made to carry such weight in a given system. The accumulation of several symbols like this: the *kustīg*, the sacred girdle; the central position of fire in the ritual; the peculiar mode of disposal of the dead (whenever this came into mandatory use among Zoroastrians); and the favour with which marriages between members of the close family circle were viewed, together with a few other religious customs—all of these have made up

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<sup>90</sup> This is emphasized by Molé 1959:185 f.

the specific character of Zoroastrianism. It may be a waste of time to look for a utilitarian or functional explanation for each one of these customs beyond recognizing their value as delimiting and defining the Zoroastrian community.

One schismatic conflict in which the custom of *xwēdōdah* may have played a role is the Mazdakite movement. The history of this movement is somewhat confused. It is not entirely clear who its founder was and at what period he lived. For our present purpose these are secondary questions, and for the sake of convenience we shall refer to the movement as 'Mazdakite', assuming a certain Mazdak to be its founder, without committing ourselves to a definite historical figure.<sup>91</sup> It seems likely that the Mazdakite movement was one expression among several of a desire to achieve a reform of the Zoroastrian religion, perhaps in order to bring it in line with other religious tendencies of the sixth and seventh centuries. Another movement which may have gone in a similar direction was that of the Kantaeans, a religious group that had its origins in southern Babylonia. The leading figure in that group is said to be a certain **Battay**, who was active at the time of Peroz (459–487), and, according to the somewhat muddled report of Theodor Bar Konay, had connections with Jews, Christians, Manichaeans as well as Zoroastrians. In order to placate the latter he adopted some of their practices and also the name which he applied to himself, Yazdānyaz,<sup>92</sup> which could mean 'worshipper of God', or 'of the gods'.<sup>93</sup> The description of their doctrines makes them rather similar to Manichaeism, but they do share a number of beliefs with the Mazdakites.

It is hard to know what to make of the reports concerning the sexual laxity of the Mazdakites. In the course of polemics any deviation from the accepted norm of sexual morality is likely to be exaggerated out of all proportion, and opponents of any movement in antiquity (or, for that matter, in the modern period) have always been apt to use, blow up, or

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<sup>91</sup> I believe that Crone 1991 offered perhaps the most reasonable reconstruction of the historical facts out of the conflicting literary reports at our disposal.

<sup>92</sup> This is a likely reading of the name, which has a number of variant forms in the manuscripts, **yzd'ny**, **yzdn'ny**, **yzd'nyz** (this latter reading is given by two of the four manuscripts).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. the report of Theodor Bar Konay, in Pognon 1898:151 ff.; translation pp. 220 ff. Madelung 1981:221 ff. quotes and discusses Arabic accounts on the Kantaeans, and suggests that they may have exercised an influence over the formation of the Mazdakite doctrines. Further discussion is in Madelung 1988:3 ff.

invent sexual slanders. The information about Mazdak's ideas in this respect is, however, quite consistent. One of our best sources for Mazdakite doctrines, Shahrastānī, says the following:

Mazdak made it unlawful for people to dispute, hate and fight each other. Since most of this is because of women and property, he made women permissible, and gave free access to property, and caused people to be partners in these two things as they are with regard to water, fire and pasture.<sup>94</sup>

The idea that women and property should be available to be approached freely, like 'water, fire and pasture', may imply nothing more radical than that the surplus property of the rich be distributed among the poor, and in a similar manner that the possession of several women by some men (which necessarily causes other men to be deprived of women) be disallowed. In this sense, all women would be made equally accessible to all. This might entail also that the custom of *xwēdōdah* was to be abolished, and that women could be claimed in marriage without regard for family and class. This type of attitude can be legitimately presented as advocating that all women be made the common property of all men. It does not seem likely that a religion with a certain ascetic tendency, as Mazdakism seems to have been, would advocate free sexual intercourse between all men and all women,<sup>95</sup> or that against the background of the known social and religious traditions of the Near East an arrangement of sexual relations on the basis of matrilineal descent could be made to

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<sup>94</sup> Shahrastānī, *Milal*, I:249. The passage is translated also in Shaki 1985:528. Shaki 1978 has shown that an equivalent terminology of partnership is employed in Pahlavi (*hamīh*) as in the report of Shahrastānī with regard to women and property.

<sup>95</sup> There is one early gnostic movement that apparently advocated the sharing of property, including women. These were the Carpocratians, whose name is derived from Carpocrates, but the idea of a community of wealth and women is found in a quotation from a writing attributed to his son Epiphanes (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* III 2; cf. Foerster 1972/4, I:38ff.). It is, however, difficult to tell whether there may have been any connection between these early gnostics, whose origins lie in second-century Egypt, and who may have derived their ethical ideas from Plato, and the much later Mazdakites.

be the chief tenet of an important religious movement in Sasanian Iran.<sup>96</sup>

The idea that wealth should be shared by all men could also be interpreted in more than one way. The more conservative understanding of it may be that wealth should not be concentrated in the hands of few people while others have no property at all, and therefore that one should effect a redistribution of wealth. This seems to be a possible interpretation of the data. As the social position of the Mazdakites is capable of being interpreted in more than one way, one would do well to read into it no more than the minimum required by the sources, so as not to commit an anachronistic blunder by creating a communism *avant la lettre*. The case for a communal possession of property and women as part of Mazdakism, though not excluded, is not unequivocally proven.

How any suggested change in marital laws was apt to be received by the priesthood of the late Sasanian period we can gather from the story of Mar Aba, the Christian catholicos at the time of Khusrau I. A Christian chronicle tells us that the Magian priests agitated against him for four reasons: because he was a convert from Zoroastrianism; because he refused to let the Christians marry more than one wife; because he separated the Christian judiciary system from the rest; and because he set out to convert Zoroastrians to Christianity.<sup>97</sup> It may be noted that what we might have thought should be put in the first place, the missionary zeal of the patriarch, appears here last; and that the prominent second place position is occupied by the abolition of polygamy among the Zoroastrians, which may be assumed to have caused considerable shock to the Zoroastrian clergy. This report, which is probably based on contemporary sources, may reflect a typical mood.

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<sup>96</sup> In this I tend to accept the cautious attitude of Yarshater 1983:999 f., rather than the more daring assumption of Crone 1991, who holds the view that these reports should be taken literally. Crone herself (1991:25) quotes evidence that shows that the main Zoroastrian objection to the innovation of Mazdak was that it created havoc with genealogies and with the distinction between nobility and common people. This could be the kind of argument used when women of noble families were to be given to low-class people. One Zoroastrian objection concerns the allotment of offspring to parents as a result of promiscuous sexual relations; this would be equally valid in the case of the harem of a polygamous magnate being disbanded following the demands of the Mazdakites, the women being married off to other people.

<sup>97</sup> *Chron. Seert*, in *PO* 7:158–159.



It is interesting to examine in some detail the little that is reported about the doctrines of the Mazdakites by Shahrastānī, the only source that gives us some information on this point.<sup>98</sup> One of the main points that emerge from that account is a rejection of the notion of a predestined course of cosmic history. Of the three moments in the history of the world, viz. the initial separation of the two principles, their mixture in the physical world, and the ultimate salvation, Mazdakism regards the last two moments as occurring ‘by accident’, not by design.<sup>99</sup> Since acting by accident and not by design is in Iranian thinking an attribute of the evil power, the conception of the Mazdakites seems to be profoundly pessimistic. The world is probably governed by the evil power in this state of mixture, and salvation may come about, but without any predetermined time set for it. In this (if our interpretation is correct) Mazdakism is at odds with the rest of Zoroastrianism, and shows itself less confident of the ultimate salvation than Manichaeism.<sup>100</sup>

A second point that we learn from Shahrastānī’s account is that the Mazdakites prohibit strife and war. Women and property are to be made permissible to all, and men are to be given joint possession over them. He also advocated the killing of souls in order to extricate them from evil and from the admixture of darkness. The last phrase surely refers not to the execution of people but to the mortification of one’s own soul, that is to say to ascetic practices, which the language used could well imply.

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<sup>98</sup> This was done admirably well by Shaki 1985, but the following discussion will show that I hold different views on certain points. Gil 1992:23 ff. has recently suggested that Mazdak’s religion was identical with Manichaeism, with arguments that unfortunately demonstrate an imperfect understanding of Manichaeism.

<sup>99</sup> ‘*alā l-itṭifāq wa-l-khabī, lā bi-l-qasḍ wa-l-ikhtiyār*’ ‘by accident and through stumbling, not by design and choice’. It may be wondered if *khabī* is not an Arabic rendering of the Middle Persian term for an accidental occurrence through fate, *jahišn*.

<sup>100</sup> Yarshater 1983:1007 declares himself to be baffled by the wording of Shahrastānī’s report, but I cannot see that this is contradicted by anything else that we know of the Mazdakites (the Khurramīs may have held a different view, but their belief that the souls of men pass through the stars and the moon on their way to the higher stages does not necessarily stand in contradiction with the Mazdakite doctrine).

A third point in the same account is the division of the elements of the world under three headings: water, earth and fire.<sup>101</sup> Of the mixture of these three elements there come about two beings: from the pure aspect there emerges the manager of good, from the turbid aspect, the manager of evil. This last point is interesting because it relegates the dualism in the world to a secondary position, as a by-product of the mixture of the elements. The two principles that exist primordially are apparently not the direct cause of the dualism in the world; dualism in the world comes about from a merger of the elements. This may shed some light on the previous statement concerning the 'accidental' character of the mixture. Dualism is presented in two layers: one is the layer of the two primordial and eternal principles, and another one takes place in the physical world, where dualism comes about as a result of the fusion of the two elements. It is quite possible that this implies also, in contrast to the rest of Zoroastrianism, a recognition that the evil agent exists legitimately in the physical world.<sup>102</sup>

The fourth point in this account concerns the structure of the divine world: it is modelled on that of the royal court in the kingdom of Iran. God is seated on a throne in the upper world 'in the same manner as the king is seated in the nether world'. There are four powers in front of him: discernment, understanding, memory,<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> That the omission of the fourth element is not fortuitous can be seen from the enumeration of the same set of elements in connection with the common possession of the goods of the world. They are to be held in common like 'water, fire and pasture', displaying a series similar to the one we have here.

<sup>102</sup> On the non-existence of evil in *gētīg* see Shaked 1967. Gnoli has recently shown (in a paper read at the conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea at Bamberg in October 1991) that there are indications for this negative definition of evil already in the Avesta. The case for the Gathas is less clear-cut.

<sup>103</sup> Yarshater 1983:1006 and Shaki 1985:533 reject the translation 'memory', proposed by Christensen, and prefer 'preservation'. The Arabic term *ḥifẓ* 'retention, preservation' may of course be translated either way, but we need here a mental power. In fact a very similar list occurs in a Zoroastrian Middle Persian text already quoted above (Lecture 3):

and joy.<sup>104</sup> This corresponds to the four persons standing in front of the king: the chief *mōbad*, the chief *herbad*, the commander of the army, and the (chief) entertainer. The functions of the attendants at the royal court are meant to correspond fairly closely to those of the mental faculties of man. The *mōbad* thus represents authoritative interpretation,<sup>105</sup> the *herbad* stands for the instruction and inculcation of the teachings,<sup>106</sup> the commander is in charge of the preservation and retention of the kingdom (like memory), and the entertainer is associated with joy. Below these there exists a hierarchy of seven associates, and below those twelve spiritual forces, called by names that are active participles of verbs denoting desire, giving and taking, and motion. The numbers are all connected with astrological figures. If any one combines in his person the three sets of ‘powers’—the four, the seven and the twelve—that man becomes divine while still in the nether world, and religious obligations are removed from him.

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*ruwān ceōn ohrmazd ud huš ud wīr ud mālišn ud andēšišn ud dānišn ud uzwārišn ceōn hān šaš amahraspand ī pēš ī ohrmazd ēstēnd* (GBd 190:13 f.; Anklesaria 1956:244).

The soul is like Ohrmazd. Intelligence, memory, sensation, thought, knowledge and discernment are like the six Amesha Spentas, who stand in front of Ohrmazd.

In this passage too the retinue of Ohrmazd is depicted like a royal court with a king and attendants, and the latter are six different mental powers, three of which seem identical with the first three powers in the Mazdakite list. Shaki 1985:533 f. is right in making the equation of the powers of the Mazdakite system with *xrad*, *wīr*, and *huš*, but he may be a bit too inventive in some of the other details of the Pahlavi terminology he reconstructs. His attempt to identify the seven planets and the twelve signs of the zodiac in the designation of the seven attendants and the twelve spiritual powers is somewhat forced.

<sup>104</sup> Bousset 1907:236 f. compares this quaternity of powers to the idea of the fourfold powers that are associated in some of the sources with the figure of Zurvan, but this may be too general a correspondence.

<sup>105</sup> =*uzwārišn*, which also designates in more general terms ‘distinction’, as pointed out above.

<sup>106</sup> =Understanding.

The fifth and last point in Shahrastānī's account states that the ruler of the upper world reigns by means of letters that combine to make up the Great Name. Those who are capable of visualizing something by virtue of the letters have the Great Mystery opening before them. Those who are incapable of that, remain in the blindness of ignorance, lack of memory, stupidity and grief in the face of the four spiritual powers.<sup>107</sup> This involves speculations concerning letters, the Great Name, and the Great Mystery—all elements familiar from Jewish, gnostic and Greek magical literature, a fact which suggests that the elect of Mazdak's faith were theurgical mystics.

What can be culled from Shahrastānī's description, though it is not a full and detailed exposition of the doctrine, is enough for identifying it typologically. It would be a mistake to combine it with accounts of the doctrines of other, related sects, attested only from the Islamic period, which may have taken up some elements from the Mazdakite theology, combining them with other materials.<sup>108</sup>

The Mazdakite movement, if the description of its theology as given by Shahrastānī is correct, uses certain Zoroastrian doctrines in a somewhat pessimistic manner as affecting the fate of the universe, but assigns the possibility of attaining divine powers to certain endowed individuals who can appropriate the mysterious knowledge hidden in the combinations of letters. Those combinations point towards the structure of the upper world. The divine world is built like the court of the King of Kings, and at the same time like the world of the planets and the signs of the zodiac. Some of our timid guesses at the meaning of the esoteric elements of Zoroastrianism may find here a paradigm for a spiritual and mysterious interpretation of the universe read into the sacred texts, although we do not know the technique of the exegesis. It may be assumed with some confidence that Mazdak did not regard himself as an innovator who deviated from the traditional teachings of Zoroaster, but merely as an interpreter, an expositor of the *zand* of the Zoroastrian scriptures. 'Orthodox' Zoroastrians belonging to the esoteric tradition may have adopted different, but essentially similar, spiritualizing interpretations of the Avesta.

The Mazdakite movement is important for our discussion if only to show the potential for permutation and diversity that exists within

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<sup>107</sup> Yarshater's rendering here (1983:1007) is inaccurate.

<sup>108</sup> This is the main criticism that could be made of Yarshater's otherwise sober and balanced exposition of Mazdakism.

dualism in general and within the Zoroastrian brand of dualism in particular. Pahlavi literature gives us a fairly consistent and coherent view of a religious dualism that tends to be rational and ritualistic. The other religious tendencies that existed in Iran, more particularly those that contained mystical elements, were put aside or toned down.

The Zoroastrian treatment of such tendencies is strikingly analogous to Judaism of the same period. The literary canon of Jewish Babylonia in the Sasanian period may create the impression that Jewish religiosity contained little beyond sober legal and ritual elements. It is only with considerable effort that other strains of Judaism, of a more mystical and spiritual kind, have been uncovered from non-canonical sources. Late Zoroastrianism, as codified in the Pahlavi books, does not give a true picture of the wealth of religious feeling that existed in Sasanian Iran. Some of that deeply felt religiosity must have seeped into Islam and may have helped shape the expressions of early Islamic mysticism.

# Appendix

## A.

### Notes on the Inscriptions of Kirdēr

THE INSCRIPTIONS of Kirdēr contain a number of details which have not yet been explained, despite the considerable advance in understanding the inscriptions made by a number of scholars. A few suggestions for clarifying hitherto unexplained points are made in the following.<sup>1</sup>

Kirdēr describes the preparations for this journey in the following terms:

**AP-m[...š]xpwxry MRKAn MRKA 'dwyn mxly krtý**  
**krtk'n ZY yzd'n W NPŠ[H] lwb'n I'dy AYK 'lt'd[y**  
**XW]Hn** (KSM 32).

This I would translate approximately as follows:

and I have made [for the name of ?] Shapur, the King of Kings, a ritual-and-formula for the sake of the deeds of the gods and my own soul, so that I may become righteous.

The two parallel expressions, 'for the sake of the deeds of the gods' (or perhaps rather 'for divine deeds') and 'for the sake of my soul',<sup>2</sup> seem

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Lecture 2, notes 25, 27.

<sup>2</sup> For this expression see Shaked 1990a.

to indicate two complementary forms of pious activity which we are unable to define more closely.<sup>3</sup>

On the puzzling expression **'dwynd mxly** much has been written.<sup>4</sup> The translation 'a kind of death' (suggested by MacKenzie) strikes me as unlikely. The sense adopted here, 'ritual and formula', is based on the assumption that this is a *hendiadys* or a *dvandva* compound.<sup>5</sup> I believe it goes tolerably well with the other two passages where the expression occurs. In KSM 34 we may translate [ly]syk MNWm BYN **'dwynd mxly [nš'st?]** XWHnd 'the deadly (companions), who were [installed, i.e. invoked?] by me in the ritual-and-formula', and similarly in KSM 40.<sup>6</sup>

MacKenzie's derivation of the enigmatic **lysyk** from the word for 'death' seems appropriate, but I would rather translate the word as 'deadly', not 'mortal'; it seems to indicate a category of beings belonging to the other world, the world of the dead, not to people about to die.

There are in Kirdēr's vision four or more 'rulers' (*šahriyār*), who seem to be characterized by the epithet **spytk'n** which may mean either 'white' or 'radiant'.<sup>7</sup> The first one is also described as 'sitting on a noble horse with a banner [*drafš*] in his hand' (KSM 34). These two details have quite a close parallel in an apocalyptic text preserved in a late Pahlavi and Pazend transmission, the *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg*:

And Peshōtan, your son, goes with 150 disciples, whose garments are white and black, and my hand is at the banner.<sup>8</sup>

The description of this Pahlavi apocalypse is as opaque as that of Kirdēr, but both reflect apparently the heritage of a common *topos*.

Another detail which has proved difficult to crack is the term **cydyn**

<sup>3</sup> On the former expression see Back 1988.

<sup>4</sup> See MacKenzie 1989:67 f.; Gignoux 1990:11 ff., where previous literature is mentioned.

<sup>5</sup> This is not much different ultimately from the translation proposed by Skjærvø 1983:292, 'ritual manthras'.

<sup>6</sup> MacKenzie's translation is different.

<sup>7</sup> Thus MacKenzie 1989:68, to §25.

<sup>8</sup> *ud be rawēd pēšōtan ī šmāh pus abāg 150 hāwišt paymōzan spēd ud siyāh ud dast ī man pad drafš* (AJam 16:52).

(KSM 39, 40), which Gignoux,<sup>9</sup> unconvincingly to my mind, explains as ‘demon’. If Gignoux were right, the spelling should be \***cyt-**, and the adjectival ending—**yn** would be out of place. The sense obtained by Gignoux’s suggestion is, besides, not very satisfactory. With some hesitation I should like to regard this word as corresponding to New Persian *cīn* ‘plait, fold’, which I assume to be related to *cīna* ‘snare, gin’. I would suggest that Middle Persian **precyn** ‘wall, hedge’,<sup>10</sup> as well as *abarzēn* ‘tent, pavilion’,<sup>11</sup> also belong to this group of words, which are all to be derived presumably from the root *čay-*. The basic sense to be ascribed to Middle Persian **cydyn** is perhaps ‘hollow, concavity’, a place where liquids are ‘assembled’. In the context of the Kirdēr inscriptions the word occurs as follows:

And now another ruler is manifest, (with) white (garments),  
and on a throne (with) a golden cup, and in front of him (?)<sup>12</sup> a  
cavity.<sup>13</sup>

As Skjærvø noted, the notion designated by the term **cydyn** turns up further on under the designation ‘pit, well’ (**c’sy**).<sup>14</sup>

The expression *zarrēn bāzm* seems to mean ‘a golden cup’. The word for ‘feast, banquet’ may well have developed its sense from the word for ‘cup’. The Avestan word for ‘cup’ is *bajina-*.<sup>15</sup> Closely related to it are the Armenian loanword from Iranian, *bažak*,<sup>16</sup> and the Aramaic

<sup>9</sup> Gignoux 1991:96 f., n. 224.

<sup>10</sup> Boyce 1977b:71.

<sup>11</sup> Attested in the compound *mašk-abarzēn* (MacKenzie 1971:55), and also in the Aramaic loan-word **’brzyn** ‘saddle-covering’, for which cf. Geiger 1938:211 ff.

<sup>12</sup> I assume that **-š...dst** denotes approximately the same as **pyšydy** in the corresponding phrase KSM 37, where we have: **APš tr’cwky XD pyšydy YK’YMWnt** ‘and a set of scales stands before him’. For the semantics one may compare New Persian *ba-dast* ‘ready, available’. Alternatively we may translate ‘his hand (*or*. his span) is a cavity’.

<sup>13</sup> (**W**) **K’N A(X)RN** (**štrd’r p**) [**yt’k spytk’n**] (**W Q**) **D(M) g’s** <*i*> **ZHByn bzmy** (**A**) **Pš c[y](d)yn YDH** (KSM 39).

<sup>14</sup> KSM 42. Much of this discussion has been foreshadowed by Skjærvø 1983: 297 f., and in Skjærvø’s forthcoming review of Gignoux 1991.

<sup>15</sup> Bartholomae 1904:1484, s.v. *raēthwiš.bajina-*.

<sup>16</sup> Lagarde 1877:24 f., No. 326; Hübschmann 1897:115.



loan-word **bzyk**.<sup>17</sup> The form *bazm* may either contain a further suffix, besides *-ina-* (attested in the Avestan word), *-aka-* (as in the Armenian loanword), *-ika-* (as in the Aramaic loanword); or it may display the phonetic transformation of *-jn to žm* in *bajina* > \**bajn* > \**bažm*. If this explanation is correct, the word for ‘feast, meal’ constitutes a semantic extension of the sense of ‘cup, goblet’.

## B.

### The Composition of Man in Zoroastrianism: Remarks on the Avestan Lists

When discussing the evidence of the Gathas and the later Avesta it should be noted that the various enumerations of powers, faculties, or parts of the human person that occur there (and there are several such enumerations), do not as a rule constitute lists that are meant to present a comprehensive picture of the subject. They tend each to serve a particular purpose within its individual context, and this determines the selection of terms used. The divergence between the lists should not be taken to represent actual differences in conception.

A number of terms relating to Man occur in Y 45:2. We have *manah-*, *səngha-*, *xratu-*, *varana-*, *uxda-*, *šyaobana-*, *daēnā-*, *urvan-*. The term *ahu-* is also mentioned, but in the sense of ‘existence’ or ‘entity’, not as designating an aspect or function of man. The whole of that verse deals not with Man, but with the two primeval entities, the two *mainyus*, the good and the evil. It constitutes, according to one current understanding of the text, the direct speech of the bounteous spirit, addressed to the wicked one, in which the difference between the two spirits is established. This difference applies to each one of the notions we have enumerated. Although the terms used are also quite clearly part of the makeup of the human person, the reason why these terms are enumerated is probably determined by the context in which they occur: these are presumably the main constituents of the spirit which determine the moral choices made. Other elements of the person that are not prominent in this function were omitted from the list; thus obviously the body, *tanu-*, has nothing to do here, although it is of course an essential part of the human person, and the same may apply to *vyānā-*, which occurs but rarely in the Avesta.<sup>18</sup> The primeval *mainyus* are akin to man

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<sup>17</sup> Geiger 1937:80b.

<sup>18</sup> Only 2 occurrences are listed, both in the Gathas.

in that they possess faculties of the intellect which are expressed in faith and action, as well as 'soul'. The terms form three groups, being arranged as they are in the last three lines of the verse. The first line speaks of *manah-*, *sangha-* and *xratu-*, which may be rendered approximately by 'mind', 'opinion' and 'intellect'. These are the three intellectual modes of action. The next line talks of *varana-*, which may be rendered by 'faith' or '(religious) choice', followed by the terms 'words' and 'actions', all three together foreshadowing, it seems, the Classical Zoroastrian triad of '(good) thoughts, words, and actions' (*humata-*, *hūxta-*, *hvaršta-*). The last line contains two terms that designate different notions of 'soul', *daēnā-* and *urvan-*.<sup>19</sup> If our analysis is correct, the three lines speak respectively of mind, of faith and action, and of the souls within the person.<sup>20</sup>

Our text Y 45:2 can be used for understanding the constitution of man only if we bear in mind that it does not give a full list of human powers and faculties, but only of those that are relevant to religious attitudes and actions. In this, man is similar in constitution to the two primeval spirits. Here too, it is interesting to note, the concept of *ahu* is found to be above the differentiation between the two spirits of good and evil, and this applies to man as well as to the two spirits.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The latest translation of the Gathas, by Kellens and Pirart 1988:155, has a completely different conception of the meaning of the verse. I believe that the strictly ritualistic approach of these two authors tends to distort the meaning of this verse, despite the great merit of their translation in other respects. For *daēnā* it may be remarked that the meaning attributed to it of 'religious vision' (Lankarany 1985; cf. Kellens and Pirart 1990:252) is not one of action but a spiritual mode of being; the later development seems to be already essentially present in the Gathic usage. The fact that it can be coupled together with *urvan-* in our verse tends to confirm this perception.

<sup>20</sup> It may be remarked that the semantic ambiguity of *daēnā* is quite typical of the Iranian religious language, and should not have evoked so much scholarly consternation. It does incorporate within it the notions of 'soul' as well as of that of an outside manifestation of one's self; of 'religion' in both its subjective sense, as the sum total of one's religious attitude and actions, and its objective sense, as the collective attitude of a whole community, and also as a representation of that collective attitude. The abstract notions of the Amesha Spentas present a similar polyvalence, and the notion of *ruwān* also plays a double role, being both the soul and a deity. The wealth of meanings attached to the name and person of the god Mithra is another example of the profusion of conflicting notions which can be found to exist under a single religious concept.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Shaked 1974a.

Another Gathic passage refers to the constitution of Man as such, but gives only very few details:

Since you, Mazdā, at the beginning, fashioned for us material possessions as well as *daēnā*-s;

and also intelligences, by your thought; since you made the bodily *uštana*;

since (you made) actions as well as opinions, by which one performs faith by (one's) will (Y 31:11).

In the first line we have, it seems, the pair of concepts *gaēthā*- and *daēnā*-, which, to make sense, should be taken to form a contrast between outside, or material, possessions against inner selves.<sup>22</sup> A similar contrast may exist in the second line: *xratu*- against *astvant-uštana*-, i.e. 'intelligence' against the power of material life.<sup>23</sup> The pair *šyaothana*- and *səngha*- in the last line also presents an analogous contrast between 'actions' and 'opinions', but both are closely related to *varəna*- just like the pair 'words' and 'actions' in Y 45:2 discussed above. The term *manah*- is applied here not to the human individual, but to Mazdā, by whom it is used for the creation of the powers of man.

This list of human functions is based on contrasting pairs where a concrete term is set in opposition to an abstract or invisible notion.

Another example which shows how certain terms relating to man are employed for a different purpose may be quoted:

Zarathushtra gives to Mazdā and to Truth a gift:

The *uštana*- even of his own person;

the predominance of Good Thought;

Obedience and Dominion of deed and word (Y 33:14).

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<sup>22</sup> Hardly 'creatures and conceptions' (as Insler takes them to mean), or 'les vivants, les consciences' (Duchesne-Guillemin). Lommel has a translation close to the sense offered here.

<sup>23</sup> The Pahlavi version is probably right in rendering the latter concept by *tanōmandān jān* 'the vital soul of corporeal beings'.

This text again displays no intention of giving a list of human faculties. Zoroaster is said to give to Mazdā and to Aša<sup>24</sup> a gift of that which he has, and it may be assumed that he gives the things that are dearest and most personal, and at the same time most relevant to his relationship with the higher powers. These things are the *uštana*-of his own person (or body), i.e. the power of life, the vital element in the body; the three concepts which we know to be closely associated with Ahura Mazdā as well as with man, viz. the Good Thought, Obedience and Dominion. These three terms belong to the category of 'spirits', and seem to be capable of acting in both manners, as free agents, independent of the person to whom they belong, as well as by forming part of the spiritual constitution of the person.

In these examples from the Gathas we have noticed that in each instance the various terms were used in a different context and for a different purpose. The later Avesta provides another perspective, when it enumerates a whole range of anthropological terminology in connection with the adoration one offers to the souls of the departed:

We worship the *ahu*, *daēnā*, *baodah*, *urvan*, and *fravaši* of the first teachers, of the first hearers of the doctrine, both righteous male and righteous female, who win the battle for the sake of Truth. We worship the soul of the cattle of good deed (Y 26:4=Yt 13:149).

The enumeration contained here is again one-sided and serves a specific and well-defined purpose. It only gives a list of spiritual components of the righteous ancestors, members of the early community, which deserve to be worshipped. These relate to cognition and religious commitment: *ahu*, the source of the other powers, which stands, in the wording of the later Pahlavi texts, 'undefiled', above the dualistic divisions; *daēnā*, the main spiritual representative of the religious function in man; *baodah*, consciousness and awareness; *urvan*, the non-material aspect of man; *fravaši*, the pre-existent as well as posthumous spiritual essence of the individual. Conspicuously absent from this list are concepts such as *tanu*, the full person, but particularly the body; and *uštana*, the vital principle in the body. These are not concepts which invite adoration.

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<sup>24</sup> I prefer to regard *ašā yācā* as a corruption of *ašāiā-cā* in the dative, with a postpositioned -ā.

The examples quoted make it clear that it would be futile to look in the Avesta for an expression of a systematic doctrine of the individual. The various terms used in each context do give us hints as to the conception of man, but it would be an error to try and systematize the matter by drawing up a single list of all the terms encountered, hoping thus to achieve a unified conception of man. To make the point clearer we may look at another list of anthropological terms:

We give and bestow all (material) possessions, the persons, the *uštānas* through the bones,<sup>25</sup> the bodily forms, the forces, the sense, the soul, the *fravaši*. We bestow them on the bounteous, *ratu*-ruling righteous Gathas (Y 55:1).<sup>26</sup>

This is quite an extensive list of terms, yet it is governed by a different point of view. Man gives as an offering his component parts, which serves as the occasion to enumerate those parts. In contrast to the previous lists, we miss here almost all the concepts that have to do with the purely intellectual and religious aspects of man. We do not have in this verse concepts such as *manah*, *səŋgha*, *xratu*, *varana*, *daēnā*, or *ahu*, which occur in the previous lists. The non-material concepts which occur in this list are probably those that have close relationship to man's earthly life. This would certainly apply to the group of three concepts: *baodah*, *urvan* and *fravaši*. The first of these represents the consciousness of the person; the other two stand for two aspects of the soul, viewed perhaps as symbolizing the whole person, one relating to life in this world, and the other to the other world.

If we disregard the term *gaēθā* which serves to introduce the list, we have four terms in the accusative plural (*tanu*, *uštāna*, *kəhrp*, and *taviši*), and three in the accusative singular (*baodah*, *urvan*, *fravaši*).

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<sup>25</sup> The term *uštāna*- is preceded by *azdabiš*, taken by Bartholomae and other scholars to be in juxtaposition to the other terms, although it differs from them by being in the instrumental plural, in contrast to the accusative of the other terms. I believe however the instrumental should be respected. The combination *azdabiš uštānansca* may be compared to *tanvascit...uštānəm* (Y 33:14), *astvantəm...uštānəm* (Y 31:11), where *uštāna*- is qualified as being related to the physical body, to the bones in particular.

<sup>26</sup> The Pahlavi version of Y 55:1 reads:

We give all material possessions, the body, that whose power is over the body, the vital soul, the form, the force (?), the consciousness, the soul, the *frawahr*... (*PhlY*, p. 236).

The first part of the list consists of physical elements, while the second is non-material, and this difference may explain the grammatical change.

Sometimes we seem to encounter *uštāna-* as parallel to *ast-* ‘bones’:

*təm ahmākāiš azdibišcā ustānāišcā yazamaide* (Y 5:3; 57:3).

Which may be translated:

We worship him by our bones (=body) and vital soul.

The Pahlavi version of this is:

*awe ke amāgān tan ud jān zīšn azeš yazēm* (PhlY, p. 37)

This version assumes an elliptical expression in the Avesta, and assigns to the instrumental group of words a meaning such as ‘by whom our body and soul derive their living’. However, among the variants listed by Geldner, we have for *uštānāscā*, *uštānānsca* i.e. an accusative plural form. This reading gives quite a plausible translation:

We worship Him and the vital souls by our bones (=bodies).

The Pahlavi version is probably based on such a reading, and may be read as follows:

*awe ke amāgān tan [ī] jān zīšn azeš yazēm*

We worship him who is (?) our body, of whom is the life of our soul.

The new proposed reading goes well, I believe, with the following phrase:

*təm ašāunām fravašīš narāmcā nāirināmcā yazamaidē* (Y 37:3).

We worship him and the *fravašis* of the righteous, both male and female.

Here too the Pahlavi version is based on a conception of the sentence which is not quite clear:

*awe ke ahlawān frawahr narān ud nārīgān nēwagīh azeš yazēm.*

We worship Him of whom is the goodness of the *frawahr* of the righteous, both male and female.

The two terms *tanu-* and *ast-* are sometimes expressed side by side in what seems to be a juxtaposition of synonyms. Thus we have the phrase

*nōit astō h[u]taštīm, nōit tanvō hu[ru]stīm.*<sup>27</sup>

It would be difficult to find a significant difference between the two terms in such a context.

To sum up, there is no Avestan text which gives a comprehensive enumeration of human faculties, powers, members of the body and spiritual constituents of the person, because each of the passages which seems to deal with these questions was formulated with a specific aim in mind. These texts specify either some of the aspects of the material and earthly existence of man, or deal with the ‘soul’ components of the person. Each text would thus tend to ignore notions that do not belong to its sphere of current interest, and would, on the other hand, tend to use superfluous terms, sometimes perhaps synonyms or near synonyms, in order to enforce its own particular point of view. As a result, combining the terms that occur in the various lists would not necessarily give us a coherent picture of the composition of man, but would merely give us a lexical list of items that belong to the sphere of anthropology.

### C.

#### Pahlavi Discussions of the Composition of Man

Much the same observation can be made with regard to the discussions of man in Pahlavi literature. There, however, the situation is more complex. In the Pahlavi books we may talk of three types of lists:

- (1) Discussions of the constitution of man, whether occurring ad hoc, as in the Avesta, or in a systematic manner.
- (2) Lists which enumerate, usually in a hierarchical order, the transmission of activity in man from within to a manifest and concrete form of activity.

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<sup>27</sup> *Pursišnīhā* 43; JamaspAsa and Humbach 1971:64.

(3) Lists which enumerate mental qualities, divided into good and bad categories. Although the dualistic distinctions are expressed in the former type of lists too, it is only in the third type that the terms which constitute it are not neutral forces of the soul but qualities with moral attributes. This third group in turn can be subdivided into two or three distinct categories, on which some words will have to be said later on.

In this context we shall be dealing chiefly with the first two categories. The third group belongs to a different theme, that of the Zoroastrian attempts at systematizing their ethical doctrines.<sup>28</sup>

The lists of the first group, those that are concerned with the composition of man, usually refer to two categories of concepts that are not always carefully distinguished by the texts themselves. These are: (1) Divisions of the soul or of the basic faculties of man; these divisions include concepts such as *jān*, *ruwān*, *frawahr*, etc. (2) Functions of the person, such as *xrad*, *huš*, *wīr*, *kāmag*, etc., i.e. powers that govern specific activities of man.

The most systematic of such discussions is in *Sad-dar Bundahišn*, a Zoroastrian text in New Persian:

There are five *mēnōg* things in man. One is called *jān*, one *ruwān*, one *axw*, one *bōy*, and one *frawahr* (*SdBd* 98).

Each one of these *mēnōg* entities or aspects has its own domain to look after: *bōy* is concerned with intelligence, wisdom and memory; *frawahr* with the assimilation and digestion of food and with the excretion of coarse matter; *ruwān* deals with the saying and doing of good things and with the prevention of bad things from being said or done; *jān* holds the body in proper order, and is in charge of various ‘powers’: taste, discernment (?),<sup>29</sup> *waxš* (‘spirit’), *pāyandagīh* (‘being motionless’), *jumbīdan* (‘being in movement’); *axw* gives constant advice to the body, to *ruwān* and to the other associates<sup>30</sup> of the person.

This list gives a fairly clear conception of one school of thought with regard to the constitution of man. It is quite patently a late formulation, and one may expect earlier discussions of this question to present

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. my discussion of some aspects of these lists in Shaked 1987a.

<sup>29</sup> I suggest reading *tamyīz* (for **tmys**).

<sup>30</sup> The meaning of the word, apparently to be read *hamkunān*, is uncertain.



different notions. Nevertheless, one point which may cause surprise at first sight, namely the fact that *frawahr* is assigned over the biological functions of food and digestion, finds confirmation in a Pahlavi text which may be assumed to reflect older tradition, the third book of the *Dēnkard*.

A typical theological text in Pahlavi, which discusses the composition of man in some detail, is in *Dēnkard* III, 123.<sup>31</sup> Some of the main points of that chapter can be summarized as follows. The ‘soul’ is the most prominent *mēnōg* element within *gētīg*, as it is the entity that maintains and directs the body. A higher layer of *mēnōg* existence within *gētīg* is the presence of the ‘essential being’, called in Pahlavi *ox*, within the soul. One is given to understand that just as the soul is *mēnōg* with regard to the *gētīg* of the body, so *ox* is *mēnōg* with regard to the relative *gētīg* of the soul.<sup>32</sup> Each one of the various *mēnōg* entities within the body of man has its own individual function: *anima* gives it life, consciousness causes it to see, and the soul rules it. The soul has several powers, among which are intelligence, awareness, wisdom and spirit. If one tries to pursue the properties that are attributed to ‘spirit’ (*waxš*), it is defined as being not an entity by itself, but attached to, or inherent in, an entity. At the same time it acts as ‘the power within the soul’. The spirit acts by discernment through wisdom. The spirit, like *fravaši*, is under the disposition of the soul. Consciousness is full of spirit, and it is this combination that causes the body to see. These two powers, spirit and consciousness, are, as it seems, hardly distinguishable from each other.

The statement of *Sad-Dar Bundahišn*, ch. 98, is supported by the conception of *Dēnkard* III, 123, where it is established that the *fravaši* is most closely associated to ‘nature’ (*cihr*), while the ‘spirit’ is connected to wisdom, and the ‘soul’ to will. *Frawaši* gives life to the body. Darmesteter regards this function of the *fravaši* as giving a hint as to the true etymology of the word, *fra-var-*, which would be identical in sense

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<sup>31</sup> See [Appendix E](#), where the relevant portions of the chapter are given in transcription and translation.

<sup>32</sup> For the relative value of the concepts of *mēnōg* and *gētīg* compare particularly the position of Ohrmazd as *mēnōg* among the *mēnōg* entities, implying that he is on a higher level of *mēnōg*-ness than the other *mēnōg* beings (Shaked 1971:78).

to Middle Persian *parvar-* 'to nourish, make grow'.<sup>33</sup> However, rather than alluding to the etymology of the word, the conception of the *fravaši* as giving nurture may be based on the kind of folk-etymology proposed by Darmesteter.<sup>34</sup> Such etymologies were not meant to be taken seriously by their originators, but were part of the technique of commentary which the Pahlavi sages used in order to lead the text they were studying in the direction they wanted it to take. This technique has its analogies in the etymological plays so frequently encountered in Indian speculative writings (already in the Upanishads) as well as in the Jewish *midrash*. It may be noticed that this conception of the function of the *fravaši* is not entirely arbitrary. In the Avestan Yašt 13 the *fravaši* are represented not only as powerful warriors, but also as concerned with the material well-being and fertility of the world.

What appears to be a different school of Zoroastrian learning regarded the *fravaši* not as the nourisher of the body, but rather as the element of man that stands in front of Ahura Mazda. This is expressed in *GBd* 34.<sup>35</sup> While there is no necessary contradiction between *fravaši* as being in the presence of Ohrmazd and as being the nourisher of the body, the fact that only a single trait is expressed in each one of these passages suggests that there were school differences on this issue.

## D.

### Some Terms Relating to Man in Pahlavi

#### 1.

#### *wārom*<sup>36</sup>

A well-known passage in Pahlavi literature, extant in several versions, enumerates the powers of the human mind. Each one of these is inhabited by a deity or a demon, and the presence of this spiritual entity is an indication of the inherent good or evil tendency of the person, while it also actively influences the thoughts and actions of the person.

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<sup>33</sup> Darmesteter 1892/93, II: 502.

<sup>34</sup> The same etymology is in *Dk* 111:218:4. As will be seen from the text given below, I differ in my interpretation of some details from Bailey and Menasce. Another midrashic etymology given in Pahlavi is by explaining *fravaši* from *fravaxš* 'growth'; cf. Bailey 1943:107 f.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Bailey 1943:92.

<sup>36</sup> These notes continue the series promised in Shaked 1974a.

The ambiguous relationship between man and the spiritual entities that dwell in him, a relationship in which man is both the initiator and the one controlled, endows Zoroastrian literature with much of its particular flavour. Man is identified with the various entities. They are said to inhabit him, and his activity and mode of life bear witness to their presence. At the same time his soul (*ruwān*) is a deity to be worshipped, a *yazad*, and many Zoroastrian passages enjoin people to do things ‘for the sake of the soul’, an expression that has become part of the idiomatic language for piety.<sup>37</sup>

The passage under discussion reads as follows:

In the mind (*ox*) there is recollection (*wārom*). Wahman holds a throne in it, Akōman holds up the way. In recollection there is desire (*kāmag*). Srōš holds a throne in it, Khešm holds up the way. In desire there is thought (*menišn*); Spandarmad holds a throne in it, the demon Tarōmad holds up the way. In thought there is speech, wisdom (*xrad*) holds a throne in it, lust (*waran*) holds up the way. In speech there is deed, religion (*dēn*) holds a throne in it, self-love (*xwad-dōšagīh*) holds up the way.<sup>38</sup>

*wārom* is here translated ‘recollection’ mainly on the assumption that it is a cognate of *warm* ‘memory’.<sup>39</sup> It is a function of the human mind that gives rise to some kind of activity. Subordinate to it in this hierarchy is ‘desire’, which is followed by the triad thought—speech—action. This mental function, coming as it does before ‘desire’ and before the point at which human activity branches off in three directions, can perhaps be rendered better ‘reflection’, rather than ‘recollection’.

The term *wārom* does indeed occur elsewhere too alongside with *ox*, and they seem to form something like an idiomatic pair:

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Shaked 1990a.

<sup>38</sup> *Dk* VI 1b; Cf. Shaked 1979:2 f.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Bailey 1934:511 f.; 1943:103 with note 1. Bailey proposes an etymological connection with *var-* ‘to choose’; however, in view of the fact that the meaning ‘a state of memory’ is prominent in this word, the possibility should not be ruled out of associating it with *var-* ‘to cover’, which

*u-m nigēzīd ō ox +ud*<sup>40</sup> *wārom ku hamē zīndag drahnāy xwāstār ud pattōg bawēm pad xwēšēnīdan ī hān rāh ud pand ī pad-eš ō hān ī pahlom axwān ī hamāg xwāhrīh garōdmān madan šāyēd.*<sup>41</sup>

And I have taught my mind and *wārom* that I should be, as long as I live, continually desirous and capable of possessing that way and path through which it is possible to come to the best existence of all ease, Garōdmān.

It is not very often that we encounter *wārom* in Pahlavi texts, but it occurs at least once in association with *menišn*, in the same manner as it occurs with *ox*:

*gyāg-ē paydāg ku ātaxš ēdōn arzōmand ī ohrmazd tan ī mardomān [ud] hān ī ātaxš tan ud jān az wārom ud menišn ī xwēš be brihēnīd.*<sup>42</sup>

It is revealed in a passage (of the scriptures) that fire is so valuable that Ohrmazd created the body of men as well as the body and *anima* of the fire from his own *wārom* and thought.

Here both concepts are attributed to Ohrmazd himself, though they obviously can also belong to the constitution of the human person.

Our first text established *wārom* as the particular seat of the god Wahman, Good Thought. This is confirmed by other texts:

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may also be the same as the root which means ‘to fill’, and possibly also the same as the root ‘to make pregnant’. The term for the structure that gave shelter to humanity in Yima’s legend could well be derived from this same root. Pahlavi *warm* (New Persian *barm*) ‘reservoir’ (*ŠnŠ* II:21–22) is also apparently connected. Bailey 1970:22 f. posits also the existence of a base *var-* ‘to asseverate, verify, realize’, though one wonders whether it should be kept separate from the verb ‘to choose’, which, indicating faith, seems to belong to the same semantic field. Other discussions of this word are: Pagliaro 1929:64 f.; Herzfeld 1938:347–349.

<sup>40</sup> MSS Y; Zaehner 1954:199 reads *ox ī wārom*, which he translates ‘my very mind’. This is hardly possible.

<sup>41</sup> ZXA 259:8 ff. Cf. Zaehner 1954:199, 217, whose translation and reading are different in a number of points. A Pāzand version is in *PāzT* 272:16 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *PRiv* 58. A parallel, though shorter, passage occurs in *PRiv*, p. 135:7.

*wahman andar šud ō wārom ī zardušt gumēxt, zarduš be xandīd ce wahman ast mēnōg rāmēnīdār.*<sup>43</sup>

Wahman entered and mingled with the *wārom* of Zoroaster. Zoroaster laughed, because Wahman is a giver of joy to the spirit.

In a parallel passage (Zs 8:10) Akōman, the fiendish opposite number of Wahman, is sent forth by Ahreman, who bids him: ‘Go with deceit to the thought of Zardusht’.

*az harw kas ke tō wahman pad wārom gāh gīrēd ēg-eš dwārēd az wārom xešm ud dwārēd āz ud waran [ud] dwārēd harwisṣ hān ī dēwān kāmāg [ud] kunišn warzišnīh.*<sup>44</sup>

Each person in whose *wārom* you, Wahman, take a place, from his *wārom* there departs Xešm, there depart Az and Waran, there departs all the desire of the demons [and their] performance of action.

The term *wārom*, as we see, can serve as much for the abode of the demons as for that of Wahman. Wrath and Lust have already been seen to be inhabitants of *wārom*,<sup>45</sup> chased out by Wahman, the Good Mind. A negative mental activity often associated with *wārom* is *kēn*, ‘Vengeance’:

*haftom. druj andar wārom a-ōšīhā ne waxšēnīdan rāy abāg wehān kēn ne dāštan ud pad a-apadīdīgīh ī az wināh ne ēstādan* (PhlT 130).

Seventhy: Not to keep vengeance towards good people, and not to persist in being unrepentant of sin, so as not to let the demons grow within one’s *wārom* immortally.<sup>46</sup>

*kēn pad menišn ma dārēd ud gugārēd kēn andar wārom ī xwēš* (PhlT 144, WāzAd §3–4).

Do not keep vengefulness in your thought. Digest (i.e. suppress) vengefulness in your *wārom*.

<sup>43</sup> Zs 8:14–15.

<sup>44</sup> ZXA 224:11 ff.; tr. Dhabhar 417, n. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. also PRiv 56:16, an advice given by Ahreman to Wrath to establish himself within *wārom*.

<sup>46</sup> The following passage in the text (PhlT 131) is a mere inversion of this one.

In this passage again *wārom* seems to be used as a synonym of *menišn*. In the following passage it is seen to be the retainer of thoughts:

*ka-š [ī] uzwān ō gōwāgīh nixwārēd,<sup>47</sup> hān saxwan andar wārom dārēd, bawandag pad-eš nigerēd ud wēnēd ku kām [ī] hān nixwārišn ī uzwān ō gōwāgīh az xrad<sup>48</sup> ud abārīg weh mēnōg dastwarīh ayāb az waran ud abārīg wattar mēnōg wiyābāngarīh (DkM 348; DkB 268).*

When the desire of the tongue hurries forth towards (the use of) eloquence, he keeps that word in his *wārom*, contemplates it with care and sees (the following): (whether) the desire of the tongue for hurrying forth for (using) eloquence springs from the authority of wisdom and the other good spirits, or from the delusions of greed and the other evil spirits.

To summarize, *wārom* is a mental concept on a lower hierarchical level than *ox*, and so it partakes of the conflict between gods and demons within man, or is at least affected by it. As it is not easy to distinguish it from *menišn* ‘thought’, it is often omitted in lists of mental faculties. An interesting list like this occurs in the late text of *Gujastak Abāliš*:

*haftom ēn pursīd ku kustīg bastan cim ce [...] mōbad guft [...] amāh ēdōn gōwēm ku ceōn-mān warrawišn pad 2 bunyaštīh +aōn-mān<sup>49</sup> pad hān ī xwēš tan be paydāgēnīd ēstēd. bahr ī ohrmazdīh ast rōšnīh ud garōdmān. pad hangōšīdag ēdōn harw ce azabar nēmag ī tan ceōn wēnišn ud +ašnawišn<sup>50</sup> ud hanbōyišn gyāg ī xrad. ud jān ud ox ud menišn ud huš ud wīr ud āsn-xrad ud gōšōsrūd-xrad gyāg ī yazdān ud amahraspandān ka mardom azabar nēmag pad hangōšīdag ī wahišt +dārēnd +bunyašt +rāy cimīh ast.<sup>51</sup>*

Seventh (question). He asked this: What is the reason for the binding of *kustīg*? [...] The *mōbad* said: [...] Just as our faith is in two principles, so it is manifest in our persons. The share of the Ohrmazd existence is light in analogy to paradise. Thus is every

<sup>47</sup> For this word see Henning 1939:105 n. 3.

<sup>48</sup> On the reading *xrad* cf. Shaked 1979:229 [note 1b:7].

<sup>49</sup> MSS **APtm’n** / **‘ZLWNtm’n**

<sup>50</sup> MSS approximately **‘yšnwpsn**

<sup>51</sup> *Guj.Ab.*, ed. Barthélémy, 27 ff.; ed. Chacha, 23 ff.

thing which is the upper portion of the person, such as seeing, hearing, seeing and smell, the place of wisdom, soul, *ox*, thought, conscience, intelligence, innate wisdom, acquired wisdom, the place of the gods and the amahraspands. When people keep the upper portion in analogy to Paradise, there is foundation to (this) principle.

The text goes on to explain that the lower portion of the person is analogous to the things which are associated with Ahreman and the demons. The *kustīg* is symbolic, according to this text, of the separation of the two zones. The list of mental faculties consists of two parts: the first part enumerates powers of perception and communication, which are said to be ‘the place of wisdom’, and the second gives a list of entities that make up the soul and that are said to be ‘the place of the gods and the amahraspands’. As the text is not very well preserved, and as it contains rather late elaborations of earlier themes, it would not be right to attach to it too much importance, or to draw far-reaching conclusions from it.

## 2.

### *wīr*

Together with *xrad*, *wīr* figures in lists of the powers of the soul; cf. ŠGV I:8, where there is talk of six ‘instruments’ (*aβzārān*). In *Dk* III, ch. 60, we have a systematic exposition of the faculties of man:

From the conceptual and material creation (*āfurišn ud dahišn*) of the Creator, the *jān* of each person is lord over its own body. For their assistance there were created from inside the body *bōy* and *frawahr*.<sup>52</sup> By the power of *wīr* it is a seeker and finder. By the strength of *huš* it is a maintainer and a guardian. By the might of *xrad* it is an observer, a selector and a setter in motion of knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Read *bōy ud frawaš*; for the association of the terms (*ruwān*), *jān*, *bōy*, *frawahr* (= *frawaš*), e.g. in *Dk* III, 218, cf. Bailey 1943:98 ff.; Menasce 1945:75. Also in *Zs* 29–30, cf. Bailey 1943:104, 209 ff.

<sup>53</sup> *DkM* 48:12–17; *DkB* 35. Cf. Bailey 1943:102; Menasce 1968:197, n. 13. Our translation is somewhat different.

The series *wīr—huš—xrad* occurs in other texts as well; cf. *Dk* VI:2, 56, 64. In *Zs* 30:36 it occurs again, with the same basic function allotted to each member of the triad of notions. The whole series is given in the *Selections of Zādspram* under the heading of *dānišnīg*, i.e. ‘that which appertains to knowledge’.

The same series figures again in *Dd* II: 13. It may be useful to quote the passage in full, as it has not yet been correctly translated:

*ce ka* <sup>+</sup>*xwābarān spurr-tom purr-abdihā passāxt dahišn ī xwadāy*,  
<sup>+</sup>*ā-š*<sup>54</sup> *a-jumbišn stī pad abar-rasišnīh ī jumb* <sup>+</sup>*zamān mēnōg ī*  
*jumbišnīg, a-wēnišnīg mēnōg a-gumēzišn ō wēnāfdāg* <sup>+</sup>*stī*<sup>55</sup> *ud*  
*wēnišnīg nimūnag, mēnōg-waxšag ruwān andar gētīg-rawišnīg*  
*tan nēwag xwadāy kard, u-š* <sup>+</sup>*jān*<sup>56</sup> *ī zīwēnāg ud frawahr ī* <sup>+</sup>*dārāg*<sup>57</sup>  
*ud wīr ī āyābāg ud huš ī pāyāg ud xrad wizēnāg ud cihr ī xwad*  
*bizišk ud zōr ī rāyēnāg ud cašm az dīdan ud gōš az ašnūdan ud*  
*wēnīg az hubōyihīdan, ud dahān az mēzag dānistan ud* <sup>+</sup>*karb*<sup>58</sup> *az*  
<sup>+</sup>*pahrmāyišn*<sup>59</sup> *humadārdan ud dil az menīdan ud uzwān az guftan*  
*ud dast az warzīdan ud pay az raftan. ēd ke jān frāxwēnīdan, ēd*  
*[ke]* <sup>+</sup>*waxšišnān puštan, ēd ke tan paywastan, ēd ke friyādāg*  
*dārišn rawāg rāyēnīdan xwēš-kārīh, hamist ō tan-abzārān jān-*  
*kārīgīhā wirāyihēd pad frārōn dādīh, humat ud hūxt ud huwaršt,*  
*ud pādāšn hān ī rōšngar ud hamēyīg nēwag-rawišnīh niwēgēnīd*  
*ud payrāst. hān frēzbānīg abar windādār mardomān rāst*  
*bawandagīh ī xwēš drust wimand dāštan, abardom xwadāyīh ī*  
*dādār ne framuštan, pad rawāg-garīh ī-š kām ō awe wisp weh-*  
*dōst ī abēzag stāyīdār ud abēzag spāsdār būdan.*<sup>60</sup>

For when the most perfect of all the beneficent ones fashioned the creation of the Lord in a wonderful manner, he made the immovable existence, by the arrival of the time of movement, into a moving *mēnōg*; (he made) the unseen and unmixed *mēnōg* over to manifest existence, a visible model; (he made) the soul,

<sup>54</sup> MSS give **APš** (=u-š).

<sup>55</sup> MSS **st'y**

<sup>56</sup> MSS **'x**

<sup>57</sup> MSS **YXSN'k** (which could possibly be read *jahēnāg* [?]).

<sup>58</sup> MSS **glp'**

<sup>59</sup> MSS **pt'm'šn'n'**

<sup>60</sup> The text is transcribed and translated by Kanga 1964:129 f. and 134 ff.



existing in *mēnōg*, the good lord in the body, flourishing in *gētīg*.<sup>61</sup> And he announced<sup>62</sup> and adorned the vivifying soul, the maintaining *frawahr*, the acquiring *wīr*, the preserving awareness, the discerning wisdom, the nature that is its own physician, and the disciplining power; (he announced and adorned) the eye (which derives [?]) from (the function of) seeing, the ear from hearing, the nose from smelling good smells, the mouth from knowing tastes, the body from experiencing touch(?), the heart from thinking, the tongue from speaking, the hand from acting, and the foot from walking; (he announced and adorned) that thing whose function is to support the growth of beings, that thing whose function is to propagate the giving of help. They are disciplined together with the powers of the body in a manner encouraging the activity of the soul through observing righteous law, viz. good thought, good speech and good deeds, and he announced and adorned the luminous and eternally current reward. It is incumbent upon men who find (the truth) to uphold the correct boundary of one's true fulfilment, not to forget the supreme lordship of the Creator, and to be full of praise and gratitude (with regard to the Creator) in front of every one of one's friends in goodness in order to propagate the Creator's will.

The passage consists of three basic parts: a description of the transfer of man from *mēnōg* over to *gētīg*; the act of endowing man with the various faculties and functions; and the statement of man's duties on earth. The list of the main faculties of man consists here of *jān*, *frawahr*, *wīr*, *xrad*, *cihr*, and *zōr*. This list of seven faculties would seem to be made up of three groups: terms for the *mēnōg* configurations of man (*jān*, *frawahr*); terms for the intellectual capacities of man (*wīr*, *huš*, *xrad*); and terms related perhaps to the physical constitution of the person (*cihr*, *zōhr*). The central part of the list is again identical with the threefold series *wīr*, *huš*, *xrad*. The relationship between the three can be summarized as follows: *wīr* acquires, i.e. it is the faculty of intellectual awareness and perception; *huš* stores, i.e. it fulfils mainly the function of memory; and *xrad* discerns, which means that it analyses and understands the information gathered by *wīr* and stored by *huš*. DK

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Shaked 1971:63, 87 ff.

<sup>62</sup> *niwēgēnīd* is evidently a denominative formation from *niwē(g)*.

VI 217 shows how *wīr* is indeed regarded as chiefly in charge of learning. In *Dk* VI D1a, *wīr* and *huš* are both said to be acquired by heritage, together with matters relating to body functions.

## E.

### Some Passages from Dēnkard III

#### 1.

#### *DĒNKARD* III, 123 (See Lecture 3)

*DkB* 89–94; *DkM* 119–124; Bailey 1943:205–209; Menasce 1945:102; 1968:194 if.; 1973:126 ff. In the following only one part of the chapter is transcribed and translated. The division of paragraphs reflects my division of passages for the whole chapter. Signs used: < > or [ ] =editorial addition; (( ))=to be deleted; += emendation, sometimes based on a variant. Explained, when necessary, in a footnote; ( ) = doubtful readings.

[15] (*DkB* 91:15; *DkM* 122:5) *andar gētīg mēnōg-tar-ez ast ruwān andar tan ud ox andar ruwān ō dārāgīh ud rāyēnāgīh ī gētīg abāyišnīg mēnōg andar gētīg.*

That which is most *mēnōg* in *gētīg* is the soul within the body, and the essential being within the soul. For maintaining *gētīg* and directing it, *mēnōg* is necessary in *gētīg*.<sup>63</sup>

[16] (*DkB* 91:17; *DkM* 122:7)<sup>64</sup> *ud wimand ī mēnōg andar gētīg ceōn jān <i> tan zīwenag <u> \*bōy<i> <i> tan wēnāgēnāg<sup>66</sup> ud ruwān <i> tan rāyēnāg.<sup>67</sup> harw ce ne sōhihēd pad tan sōhišnān <u> wēnihēd pad jān wēnišn mēnōg ast.*

The definition of *mēnōg* in *gētīg* is like the *anima* which keeps the body in life; (like) the consciousness, which causes the body to see; (like) the soul, which directs the body. Anything which is not perceived by bodily perceptions but is seen by the vision of the *anima*, is *mēnōg*.

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<sup>63</sup> Earlier transcribed and translated in Shaked 1974b:320, text No. III.

<sup>64</sup> There is a dittography here, probably because a copyist first omitted **W** **wymnd**, and then re-started the sentence.

<sup>65</sup> **MS bw'**

<sup>66</sup> **MS wyn'kyn'k**

<sup>67</sup> Another dittography occurs here.

[17] (*DkB* 91:20; *DkM* 122:12) *ud mēnōg winārd ceōn ruwān* <i>was-zōr-ez, ceōn wīr <uđ> huš ud xrad <uđ> waxš zōrān ī jān <uđ> ruwān.

*Mēnōg* is organized like the soul, which indeed possesses several powers, such as intelligence, awareness, wisdom and spirit, the powers of the *anima* and of the soul.

[18] (*DkB* 91:21; *DkM* 122:14) *ham hēnd ruwān ud waxš ud <frawahr> cihr, pad hān ī harw 3 mēnōg hēnd.*

The following are identical: soul, spirit and [fravashi]-nature, by the fact that all three are *mēnōg*.

[19] (*DkB* 92:1; *DkM* 122:15) *ud jud hēnd ruwān ud frawahr az waxš pad hān ī ruwān ud frawaš stī-z hēnd ud waxš pad stī.*

The soul and the fravashi are different from the spirit in that the soul and the fravashi are entities, while the spirit is adjunct to an entity.

[20] (*DkB* 92:3; *DkM* 122:17) *ud jud hēnd ruwān ud frawahr ēwag az did pad hān ī ruwān kāmāgōmand kāmīg-kār <uđ> frawahr cihrōmand ud cihrīg-kār.*

The soul and the fravashi are different from each other in that the soul is possessed of a will and is active by the will, while the fravashi is possessed of a nature and is active by nature.

[21] (*DkB* 92:4; *DkM* 122:19) *ud jud ast waxš az ruwān pad hān ī ka ruwān xwadīh ī waxš ((ud)) waxš nērōg ī pad ruwān.*

The spirit is different from the soul in that while the soul is the selfness of the spirit, the spirit is the power within the soul.

[22] (*DkB* 92:5; *DkM* 122:20) *ud jud hēnd harw \*<sup>368</sup> pad-ez judkārīh, \*ce<sup>69</sup> kār ī waxš ((ud)) xrad-ez-wizīngarīhā, ud hān ī frawahr cihr-hayyārwandīh ī pad-eš, ud hān ī ruwān kāmīg-kārīhā-z.*

All \*three are different as to their different actions, \*for the action of the spirit is indeed through discernment by wisdom, and that of the fravashi is the assistance of the nature which is within it, and that of the soul is indeed through the action done by the will.

[23] (*DkB* 92:7; *DkM* 123:1) *ud jud ast ruwān az frawahr cihr ud waxš, <ce> ruwān winārdārīh, frawahr ud waxš winardag hēnd az ruwān.*

The soul is different from the fravashi-nature and the spirit, <for> the soul is disposition, while the fravashi and the spirit are under the disposition of the soul.

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<sup>68</sup> MS TLYN (=‘2’).

<sup>69</sup> MS MDM.

[24] (*DkB* 92:9; *DkM* 123:3) *ud ham hēnd āgnēn pad hān ī ka pad ham-rasišn\harw 3 abāg uštānōmand wād ī ast \*jān, winārišn ī mardom bawēd. frawahr pad ātaxš cihr uštānēnāg wād; pad wād-uštānīh zīwēnīdār ī tan.*

They are together identical in that when all three combine with the wind endowed with vital power, which is the *anima*, there comes about the disposition of man. By the nature of fire, the fravashi causes the wind to possess vital power. By the fact that the wind possesses vital power, it gives life to the body.

[25] (*DkB* 92:12; *DkM* 123:7) *ruwān andar tanōmandīh pad waxšō-mand bōy abāgīh wēnāgēnāg ud rāyēnāg ī tan.*

By association with the spirit-endowed consciousness, the soul within the bodily existence directs the body and causes it to see.

[26] (*DkB* 92:13; *DkM* 123:8) *ud hēnd \*bōy<sup>70</sup> ud waxš pad mēnōgīh \*winārdārīh,<sup>71</sup> ī ast<sup>72</sup> awēšān ham hēnd harw <2> pad mardom winārd-ārīh. ud pad-ez hān hamīh ī frawahr ud waxšōmand \*bōy<sup>73</sup> widard tan abāg ahlaw ruwān.*

There is an identity between the consciousness and the spirit in ordering *mēnōg*. That is to say, the two are identical in ordering man. By the very association of the fravashi with the spirit-endowed consciousness, at the death of the body (they are) with the righteous soul.

[27] (*DkB* 92:15; *DkM* 123:11) *jud hēnd \*bōy<sup>74</sup> <ud> frawahr azruwān <pad hān ī> ka ruwān druwandihēd \*ōh-ez<sup>75</sup> bōy ud frawahr <i> druwand az-eš wisānihēnd.*

Consciousness and the fravashi are different from the soul [in that] when the soul is declared wicked, consciousness and the fravashi of the wicked (person) are separated from it.

[28] (*DkB* 92:17; *DkM* 123:13) *ud yazdān ud dēwān astīh dēn paydāgīh. abar yazdān astīh weh waxš <i> ast xrad-ez, abar dēwān astīh*

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<sup>70</sup> **MS bw'**

<sup>71</sup> MS *winārdār*.

<sup>72</sup> MS adds Y.

<sup>73</sup> **MS bw'**

<sup>74</sup> **MS bw'**

<sup>75</sup> MS **KNc**.

wattar((īh)) waxš ī ast waran-ez ī andar mardomān tan. azabar hān ((ī)) paydāgīh \*gugāhīh<sup>76</sup> ēdōn. harw 2 mēnōg hēnd ud pad-ez jud wimandīh juttar hēnd az āgnēn ce wimand <i>yazdān mēnōg ī zīndag ī a-marg ī dānāg, ud wimand ī dēwān mēnōg <i> zīndag ī duš-marg ī dušāgāh.

The existence of the gods and of the demons, (as) manifest from the scriptures. Concerning the existence of the gods, the good spirit is indeed the wisdom, concerning the existence of the demons, the evil spirit is indeed the lust that is in the bodies of men. The testimony for that, beyond that which is revealed, is thus: both are spirits, but by their difference in definition they are different from each other. For the definition of the gods is: a living, undying and wise *mēnōg*, while the definition of the demons is: a living, possessed of evil death and ignorant *mēnōg*.

[29] (*DkB* 93:1; *DkM* 123:19) *az-ešān ahlaw- <ruw>ān ud druwand-ruwān mardom. ahlaw-ruwān pad yazdān \*ham-wimandīh<sup>77</sup> az hān ī ka zīndag ī dānāg ī a-marg ruwān pad ahlawīh ī yazdān. ud druwandruwān az ham-wimandīh ī abāg dēw az hān ī ka zīndag ī dušāgāh ī margōmand ruwān pad druwandīh ī dēw ham-wimand.*

Among these are the people who possess a righteous or a wicked soul. Those of righteous soul have the same definition as the gods, for the living, wise and undying soul is (identical with) the righteousness of the gods. Those of wicked soul, by the fact that they share the same definition as the demons, are identical in definition with the wickedness of the demons, as their soul is living, ignorant, and endowed with death.

[30] (*DkB* 93:4; *DkM* 124:1) *abar astīh ī harw 2 azabar hān gugāhīh gugāh. azešān yazdān mānāg-ez dānāg, dēw ud druj mānāg ((ī)) dušāgāh. mardomīhā abar astīh ī harw 2 dānāgīh ī andar mardom bun <i> yazdānud dušāgāhīh pad-eš bun <i> dēw. azabar hamāg hān gugāhīh gugāh.*

Concerning the existence of both (*mēnōgs*), that testimony (serves as) additional proof. Of those, the wise one resembles the gods, and the ignorant one resembles the demons and the *druj*. For people, knowledge concerning the existence of the two among men is the basis of the gods, and ignorance concerning it is the basis of the demons. That testimony (serves as) witness in addition to all that.

<sup>76</sup> MS **gwk'sx**

<sup>77</sup> MS **xmymndyx**.

## 2.

*DĒNKARD* III, 218 (see Lecture 3)

*DkB* 190–192; *DkM* 241–243. Cf. Bailey 1943:99 f.; Menasce 1973; 230 f.

[218:0] *abar mēnōgān ī andar mardom u-šan kārīgar u-šan kār az nigēz ī weh-dēn.*

On the *mēnōgs* that are in the person, their effecters (i.e. those that cause them to act) and their functions. From the teaching of the Good Religion.

[1] *hād az weh-dēn nigēz andar šāyēd +ku*<sup>78</sup> *sāmān az āfurišn <ud> dahišn mēnōgān ī andar mardom tan kārīgar māyagwar ēn-ez 4 ast, ruwān, jān, frawahr, bōy.*

From the instruction of the Good Religion. It is appropriate (to know) that the definition from the creation<sup>79</sup> (of) the *mēnōgs* that are principally the effecters in the body of man is (that they are) these four: soul, *anima*, pre-existent soul, and consciousness.

[2] *ruwān ast ox xwadāy ī abar tan ceon kadag-xwadāy kadag, ud aspwār asp, rāyenīdār +ī tan. ud jān bōy ud frawahr hammist waxš ī padeš ud andar-šan abzārōmand ruwān.*

The soul is the lord and master over the body, like a house-lord over the house, like a horseman over the horse, (and it is) the controller of the person. The *anima*, consciousness and the pre-existent soul together are the spirits that are in it, and within them the strong one is the soul.<sup>80</sup>

[3] *jān wād ((ī)) az frawahr cīhr uštānēnīdag pad uštānīh <ō> uštān mand-dāštār ī ast*<sup>81</sup> *+ud tan ceon drist-xwārdār ī <kadag> kadag-xwadāy, ud kārīg-dāštār ī asp aspwār. ēd ī ka az tan jud bawēd tan margihēd ceon ka stun ī kadag škihēd kadag hambahēd.*

The *anima*-wind, derived from the *fravaši*-nature, is given vitality by the vitality, maintaining the vitality of the +bones and the body. Just like the one who maintains the house in good repair, the house-master, and

<sup>78</sup> This is the reading of Bailey, who relies on Zaehner 1937/39:898.

<sup>79</sup> Menasce translates: ‘dans la limite du possible a partir de la production et de la creation’. *dahišn* seems to be a gloss on *āfurišn* here; this is probably also the opinion of Bailey. *andar šāyēd* is translated by Bailey ‘it is possible’.

<sup>80</sup> Or: ‘and within them is the powerful *ruwān*’. Bailey: ‘and among them the *ruwān* possesses instruments’. Menasce: ‘...et qui en elles sont instruments de la *ruwān*’. Cf. Williams 1990 II:186, n. 32:3, for a short quotation from this section.

<sup>81</sup> Written **AYT**

the one who maintains the horse in effectiveness, the horseman. Thus when it separates from the body, the body dies, just as when the pillar of the house is broken, the house is shattered.

[4] *ud frawahr cihr dāštār ud parwardār-ez ī tan ceon wirāstār ud ābādān-dāštār ī kadag-xwadāy kadag ud mādagdār ī aspwār asp ēd ī ka az tan jud bawēd tan šud-zōr ud a-kār mānād ceon kadag ka az wirāyišn hilihēd awērānihēd.*

*Fravashi*-nature maintains and nourishes the body. Like the one who maintains (the house) in good order and who causes it to prosper, which is the house-master with regard to the house, and a steward, (that is to say) the horseman, with regard to the horse. The proof of that is<sup>82</sup> that when it separates from the body, the body remains powerless and inactive, as when a house is left without repair it becomes desolate.

[5] *ud bōy rōšn-dāštār <ī tan ceon> kadag-xwadāy kadag wēnāgīh<sup>83</sup> <ud> aspwār asp. wēnāgēnīdār <īh> ī kadag-xwadāy andar kadag <ud> aspwār abar asp ceon rōšnīh ī gēhān xwaršēd ud +cirāg<sup>84</sup> ī andar kadag. ēd ī ka az tan judāg jahēd ruwān andar tan anāgīh ud tan andar-ez zīndagīh a-mālišn bawēd.*

Consciousness is the maintainer of light <in the body, like> the house-master causing visibility in the house and the horseman (for) the horse. The fact that the house-master causes visibility in the house and the horseman (does the same) with regard to the horse, is like the sun, which is the light of the world, and (like) a lamp within the house. The proof for that is that when it is removed from the body, there is distress for the soul in the body and there is lack of sensitivity for the body, though alive.

[6] *ud ruwān pad frawahr ud bōy ud jān tan-abzārīh pad xwēškārīh ((ī)) aweš fristēd abē-wahānagīh.<sup>85</sup> u-š xwēškārīh kōšišnīg wānīdārīh ī druz, ceon aspwār pad asp zēn-abzārīh zadārīh ud wānīdārīh ī dušmen. ud dušmen ī ruwān ceon dušmen-ez ī-š abzārān kalānēnīdag ((ī)) druz ō marnjēnīdārīh ī dām, āz, waran, xešm, kēn, nang ud arišk-ez ī mad*

<sup>82</sup> *ēd ī ka*: This expression occurs several times in this chapter and in other passages in *Dk* III, and its function is to introduce a piece of evidence that shows the validity of the foregoing statement.

<sup>83</sup> Perhaps to be emended to a causative form like *+wēnāgēnišnīh* or *+wēnāgēnīdārīh*.

<sup>84</sup> Bailey's emendation.

<sup>85</sup> *abē-wahānagīh* means literally 'without excuse, without subterfuge', i.e. fulfilling something without fail. De Menasce reads *apē ahōk*.

*ēstēd ō tan <pad> kōxšišn ī abāg razm-ez <i> tan ud ruwān pad awwēnīdan ((ī)) ud tarwēnīdan ī az razm ku pad hān ī awe wānīdārīh marnjānd ud akārānd abārīg kōxšišnīg dahišnān ī wehīh.*

The soul sends strict adherence to it<sup>86</sup> through the instruments of the body, through the pre-existent soul, the consciousness and the *anima*, for (fulfilling its) function. Its function is to fight and vanquish the demon, as a horseman beats and vanquishes the enemy by the arms and instruments of the horse. The enemy of the soul is like an enemy whose instruments have been made great<sup>87</sup> by the demon for killing the creatures, (which are) lust, illicit desire, wrath, vengeance, shame and envy. These have come to the body in order to fight against it and (for) the battle against the body and the soul through reproaching and overcoming at the battle, so that by that victory they may kill and render powerless the other battle-fighting creatures of goodness.

[7] *ox xwadāy ud razm-pad <i> ruwān. ka pad frawahr ud bōy ud jān <i> tan-abzārīh amahraspand īš hayyār āhang ī kōšīšn ī abāg druz wigrād ud arwand pad ((nšm)) xwēš tagīgīh druz wānīdār ud az tan be kardār <i> druz, az gēhān be gannāg mēnōg zad ud wānīd ud a-pādexšā kard xwad az druz +bōxt ahlaw.*

*Ox* is the lord and commander-in-battle of the soul. When, with the pre-existent soul, consciousness and *anima*, which are the instruments of the body, the *amahraspands*, which are its helpers, turn towards doing battle with the *druj*, it becomes the victor of the *druj*, and expels it from the body, being alert and nimble, by its own swiftness, (then) the Evil Spirit is turned out of the world, beaten, vanquished and incapable, and it (*ox*?) by itself is righteous, being saved from the *druj*.

[8] *ka-š pad-ez škan ī rah <i> 2 asp az hamēmār az tan wihēz (DkB 192) bawēd pad xwēš xūb-kārīh ham-nērōgīh pērōzīhā ō bun franāmīdan ud az awe ī xwadāy frēstīdār ī ō kōšīšn framān abesar ī pērōzān madan pad jāyēdān āsān purr urwāhm gāh nišastan.*

When, following the Opponent's breaking of the two-horse chariot,<sup>88</sup> it (i.e. *ox*?) gets movement from the body by the fact that it goes by its

<sup>86</sup> Scil. to the body.

<sup>87</sup> *kalān* 'great' is attested in Manichaean Parthian and in New Persian. It was emended by de Menasce, unnecessarily and in fact impossibly, to read *kirēnēnītak* (a causative form is not called for). The form *kalānēnīdag* appears here in a strange syntactic environment, for it seems to function, if my translation is correct, as a participle indicating the past, and in addition, it precedes its agent noun.

<sup>88</sup> This is presumably an allusion to the body.



own good action and its equal power in triumph to the origin, and by the fact that it got order from the Lord, who sent it to do battle, it gets the crown of the victorious, it will sit on the throne for ever in ease and full of joy.

[9] *ka pad +frēb ī az hamēmār ašgahānīg āsānīh dōšagīhā andar kōšišn wastār ud az amahraspandān bē āhang ud ō druz ((p'c)) frāz āhang bawēd <pad> druxtan ud druwandihīdan ((ud)) druz padeš abarwēzihēd ud ēwtāg andar dranjišn + wālihēd ud + dastgraw ō druz gyāg ((kašēd)) kašihēd tā fraškerd + grawīg zindānihēd.*

When, by the deceit of the Opponent, it becomes slothful, and through love of ease it becomes negligent and turns away from the Amahraspands and towards the demons, by the fact of his being misled and made wicked, the *druj* becomes victorious in him and he is made to grow alone in daevic speech and is dragged captive to the place of the *druj*, and to the time of the Renovation he is held hostage in prison.

[10] *weh-dēn paydāgīh hān ī-š nēwag ahlawīh gētīg husrawīh ud gēhān padeš anāg druwandīh gētīg dusrawīh daxšag passazagīha.*

A revelation of the Good Religion: The mark of that which has within it good is righteousness and good fame in the material world and in the cosmos; (the mark of that which has within it) evil is wickedness and bad fame in the material world, (all) according to the appropriate (cases).

## REFERENCES, ABBREVIATIONS, AND SYMBOLS

*THE following symbols are used throughout the book in textual editions and translations: < > or [ ]=editorial addition; (( ))=to be deleted; ( )=doubtful readings; +=emendation, sometimes based on a variant (explained, when necessary, in a footnote).*

*The inscriptions of Kirdēr are quoted according to the common abbreviations (KSM, KKZ); cf. Gignoux 1972; 1991. Classical and Oriental texts are quoted by author's name and a short title; other publications are quoted by author's name and date of publication.*

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*AJam*=Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg, cf. Messina 1939.

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